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THESIS

BREAKING CONSENSUS: THE OCCUPATION AND THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES

by

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**BREAKING CONSENSUS: THE OCCUPATION AND THE
EMPLOYMENT OF THE ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES**

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ABSTRACT

With the establishment of universal conscription into the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and reserve duty lasting much of the average male's adult life, the IDF became one of the central institutions of the State of Israel. The occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, the Sinai, and Golan in 1967, forced Israelis to re-examine their deeply shared, or hegemonic views about security, peace, and war, especially regarding the employment of the IDF. This thesis examines the effects of Israeli political divisions, specifically with regard to the occupied territories, and further, how those political cleavages affect the employment of the IDF. Its first case study examines the progression of selective refusal to serve in the IDF from the extreme left of the Israeli political spectrum to the center-left, from the Lebanon War through the current uprising. The second case study examines the relationship between the IDF and Fundamentalist Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories, emphasizing resistance to settlement removal over time. This thesis concludes with prescriptions for redefining the borders of the State of Israel in order to prevent a loss of consensus regarding the legitimacy of the state from the right or the left of the political spectrum.

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I. INTRODUCTION: THE IDF AND ZIONIST HEGEMONY

A. ISRAEL AND THE IDF: HEGEMONIC PROJECTS

This thesis applies Gramsci's concept of hegemony – an intellectual discourse or worldview so dominant within a society that it becomes “common sense” – to the role of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in Israeli national life. The State of Israel is unique in that it is entirely a construction of political entrepreneurs, the Zionists. Zionism emerged from the nationalist movements of the nineteenth century as the pursuit of a nation-state to serve as a homeland for Jews. Zionists chose Israel as the site of their homeland for its significance in Jewish religion and culture. Jews recognized Israel as their historic homeland and bided the days until their return to it. This common vision of the importance of Israel in Jewish mythology was not sufficient to impel the creation of a Jewish state. Rather, Israel was a symbol Zionists used to rally support in the creation of a modern Jewish state.

Although many Jews were citizens or subjects of modern states, anti-Semitism or cultural differences made participation in the institutions of modern statehood largely alien to the Jewish people. Zionists thus saw the need to create an Israeli identity, nationhood apart from merely Jewish identity, privileging Israeli Jews above other Jews to encourage emigration, and privileging Jews above other nationalities within Israel, to make Jewishness a *sine qua non* of Israeliness. The second half of their hegemonic project was therefore to convince Jews coming to Israel of the need for the civil religion of Zionism, making participation in the state of Israel more central to Israeli life than even Jewishness.

Participation in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) was an obvious site for the creation of Zionist hegemony and the acculturation of Jews in Israel to Zionism. Conflict with the local Arab inhabitants of Israel whom the Zionist enterprise sought to displace created the need for communal defense of the Jewish community before the state of Israel existed. The civil strife of the Yishuv period mutated into inter-state and inter-communal war following independence in 1948, giving Israel the patina of a state born in conflict. For the state of Israel, conflict with Arab neighbors never ended. Rather, Israelis

characterized the state of relations with their neighboring states as a prolonged war, interrupted by cease-fire, never settled. Unending conflict merited the creation of a defense establishment equal to the task of constant readiness in a war for the survival of the nation. Thus, the IDF conscripts, with few exceptions, all able-bodied eighteen year-old Israelis for three years of compulsory service. The state maintains a cadre of professional soldiers beyond their three years of compulsory service in order to train and lead the draftees. To augment this body in times of crisis, the state maintains a huge reserve force relative to its population, consisting of most able-bodied adult males until their fiftieth birthday, and adult females until marriage. Reservists typically serve one month of active duty each year, often in front-line combat units. Israel extracts more from its citizens, in terms of military service, than any other state in the world.

In the face of unending conflict for state survival, hegemonic consensus about this extractive arrangement is not problematic. This was most certainly the case in the early days of Israeli statehood, wherein the idea of *ein brera*, that Israelis had no choice other than to fight for their survival, pervaded Israeli considerations of their strategic situation. However, employment of the IDF other than in the course of state survival problematizes the hegemonic enterprise that is the IDF. This thesis seeks to illustrate challenges to Israeli hegemonic consensus regarding the employment of the IDF. As military historian Martin Van Creveld states, “For decades on end it was...*ein brera* and the utter sense of determination that went with it that provided the real dynamo behind Israeli military prowess. Perhaps it was predictable that, if it went, everything else would go as well.”¹

B. THE ZIONISTS & THE IDF: HEGEMONIC CONSENSUS

The use of the term “hegemonic consensus” in this thesis rather than just “consensus” is a conscious effort to characterize Israeli attitudes toward the IDF and toward the state as the result of Zionist entrepreneurs’ hegemonic enterprise.² Therefore,

¹ Martin Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive, a Critical History of the Israel Defense Force*, (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2002) 126.

² In discussing the Gramscian concept of hegemonic conceptualizations of states, especially with regard to decolonization, and attempts by religious Zionists to alter the prevailing hegemonic consensus, this thesis is indebted to Ian Lustick’s book *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993). Lustick discusses hegemonic conceptualizations of Israel and the occupied territories in comparison to England and Ireland and France and Algeria. Although the focus of this thesis

a brief explanation of Gramscian hegemony is relevant. Entrepreneurs attempt to persuade other groups in society to accept their political and cultural values. In the case of Israel, the entrepreneurs were Zionists. Hegemony is the product of that persuasion; the values of entrepreneurs become common sense to the citizens of the society. Once a set of values achieves hegemony in a society, changing or even debating those values becomes difficult because to do so is to challenge the basic tenets of the society. According to Gramsci, to alter hegemonic consensus without a violent social revolution, one must wage a *War of Position*, a protracted struggle across the institutions of civil society.

Israel is the product of Zionists' hegemonic enterprise, thus its institutions are products of Zionist hegemony. Differentiation from the Diaspora was essential to the Zionist state-making project, thus the Zionists constructed a civil identity of which the IDF was a primary site for socialization and acculturation. Zionists constructed Israeli identity and culture *parri passu* with the Israeli state. The Zionist construction of Israeli Jewry is that of "*yahudat shririm* (muscular Jewry)," the continuation of a lineage of biblical heroes in Israel, and a separate identity from the demoralized Diaspora Jews; Israeli Jews are able to defend themselves.³

According to Israeli sociologist Sara Helman, "War-making and state-making have been closely connected in Israel as elsewhere. However, war and conflict management in Israel...has not been limited to the state-making stage. War and conflict management have turned into a permanent feature of the socio-political order."⁴ In that respect, the depiction of unceasing conflict with neighboring states enhances the extractive capability of the Israeli state. The perpetuity of conflict privileges the IDF as "the one great institution around which a young and heterogeneous nation could rally."⁵ Zionists capitalized on the unconcluded war for independence to rally Israeli citizens

is primarily the implications of occupation for hegemonic consensus regarding the IDF, Lustick's discussions of Gramscian methods of challenging existing hegemony is particularly relevant.

³ Van Creveld, 11.

⁴ Sara Helman, "Militarism and the Construction of the Life-World of Israeli Males," *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*, eds. Edna Lomsky-Federer and Eyal Ben-Ari (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999) 212.

⁵ Van Creveld, 123.

under the banner of the IDF; thus, the defense forces are essential to the hegemonic construction of the state of Israel. With respect to the constant embattled status of the state of Israel, *ein brera* is more than just a slogan; rather it is a key enabling concept of Israeli military doctrine. “No Choice” is the hegemonic definition of Israel’s conflict with its neighbors. *Ha’Aretz* military correspondent Ze’ev Schiff illustrates features of IDF doctrine that re-emphasize the notion that Israel has no choice other than a constant state of preparedness for war.

Few Against Many – The fact that any armed conflict will pit the small population of Israel against an Arab camp many times its size has been a salient characteristic of the Arab-Israeli conflict since its inception... *A War of Survival* – Unlike other nations, Israel faces an enemy whose aim is not merely to defeat her army or to conquer a specified area of land. The intention of the Arab governments has been...the liquidation of the Jewish state...*The Strategy of Attrition* – The Middle East dispute is marked by a flagrant asymmetry in the objectives of the two sides. Whereas the Arabs wish to destroy Israel, the IDF could not adopt a similar policy vis-à-vis the Arab world... *Geographic Pressures* – Israel...was in a grave geo-strategic position prior to the Six Day War...This situation gave rise to a deep fear of a sudden Arab attack, which in turn produced an acute awareness that Israel would always have to strike first if she were to survive.⁶

These strategic characteristics became the “facts” of the international situation in the Middle East for Israelis, evidence of the hegemony of the Zionist project. As such, the state of Israel, in support of the IDF was able to extract much more from its populace than any other industrialized state. Hegemonic consensus that Israel was always at war produced a militarized Israeli state. The degree of militarization is so great that, “Most Israeli boys and girls at the age of fourteen are required to join a paramilitary organization called the GADNA (a Hebrew acronym for youth battalions).”⁷ Further, conscription and reserve duty require the devotion of years of adulthood to military service. However, most Israelis believe that opting out of service as an abnormal or deviant act.⁸ As Schiff states, “The willingness to serve in the IDF is almost axiomatic.”⁹

⁶ Ze’ev Schiff, *A History of the Israeli Army*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985) 115-7.

⁷ Ibid, 102.

⁸ Helman, 203.

⁹ Schiff, 104.

C. HEGEMONIC CHALLENGES

It is the centrality of service in the IDF to Israeli citizenship, and the perception of the appropriateness of the militarized state, that make challenges to that axiom hegemonic challenges. These challenges to hegemony are the problematique of this thesis. According to Israeli anthropologist Myron Aronoff, “Controversial wars and even negotiations and treaties terminating conflict provide contexts for the escalation of political divisions.”¹⁰ In Israel however, since military service borne out of conflict has attained the level of hegemonic consensus, controversial wars, and the loss of *ein brera* through war (as in Lebanon) or through peace treaty (as with Egypt and Jordan) challenge hegemonic consensus rather than incumbent-level, i.e. the prevailing political consensus.

The original Zionists’ success in creating a hegemonic conceptualization of Israeliness did not mean that alternative conceptualizations did not exist. Religious Zionism, an alternative conceptualization that characterized the state of Israel as a step in the process of messianic redemption, attempted its own project to alter hegemonic consensus as to the defining characteristics of Israel. The territorial windfall that befell Israel following the 1967 War was the catalyst for the religious Zionists project: to bring the occupied territories under Jewish domination, preparing the way for the messiah. As such, these entrepreneurs attempted to erase the pre-1967 border from Israeli consciousness, and render these territories inseparable from the state of Israel. The original Zionist hegemonic consensus about the need for territorial defensive depth assisted their project. Further, they attempted to settle the occupied territories and integrate them into Israeli culture. Conflict with the Arab inhabitants of the territories, and peace treaties with Arab neighbors outside the territories, derailed the hegemonic project of the religious Zionists. With the specter of interstate war removed, and given the huge disparity of power between the Palestinians and Israelis, conflict within the territories was completely alien to the existing hegemonic understanding of the threat to Israel and the employment of the IDF.

¹⁰ Myron Aronoff, “Wars as Catalysts for Political and Cultural Change,” *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*, eds. Edna Lomsky-Federer and Eyal Ben-Ari (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999) 38.

D. METHODOLOGY

This thesis studies each of the preceding hegemonic challenges, using case studies taken from movements from each end of the Israeli political spectrum. I chose these cases to illustrate the polarizing effect of occupation on attitudes towards the employment of the IDF. That the final product of each challenge to hegemonic consensus calls for selective refusal to serve in the IDF based upon objections to its employment is particularly interesting.

The first case explored in this thesis discusses the progress of Yesh Gvul, a protest group that originally called for selective refusal to serve in the Lebanon War. At its outset, even committed Israeli pacifists considered Yesh Gvul to be an aberrant group, advocating an aberrant form of protest. In the intervening two decades between the Lebanon War and the Al-Aqsa Intifada, the selective refusal of Yesh Gvul has become more acceptable. Growing acceptance of Yesh Gvul comes from Israeli hegemonic consensus that the IDF is a defensive instrument. Justification for the Lebanon war as defensive in nature was problematic, and thus the Lebanon campaign engendered a level of anti-war protest then unseen in Israel. The employment of the IDF to put down the first Intifada was an affront to the hegemonic conceptualization of the IDF as an instrument of national survival; the Palestinians could not threaten the existence of the state of Israel.

Thus, the case of Yesh Gvul illustrates the challenge occupation poses to the hegemonic consensus Zionists created. Employment of the IDF in the absence of a threat to state survival, in the absence of *ein brera*, changes consensus about the appropriateness of the IDF from hegemonic to incumbent-level, thus open for debate. Support for the IDF was once monolithic, but as a result of the occupation, it became problematic.

Selective refusal of Yesh Gvul is a protest movement of the Israeli left, a protest against occupation. That a similar phenomenon would occur on the fringe of the Israeli right is therefore all the more interesting a phenomenon. The Israeli government employed the IDF to remove settlements in the Sinai, and encountered little resistance.

The Israeli right is determined to resist any attempt to repeat that feat in the West Bank or to a lesser degree, the Gaza Strip.

Jewish settlement of the West Bank and Gaza is essential to the hegemonic project of religious Zionists to alter the Israeli conceptualization of their state, from a normal state to a sacred state, paving the way for ultimate redemption. The acquisition of territory in 1967 was a catalytic event for religious Zionists, inspiring them to seek means to achieve the incorporation of the occupied territories into Israel. The willingness of the Israeli government to exchange territory for normal relations following the Camp David Accords illustrated to religious Zionists that mere settlement in the territories was not sufficient, rather they had to affect a change in Israeli hegemonic consensus of the Land of Israel, and the purpose of the state of Israel. The hegemonic project involved settlement construction, and political and extra-parliamentary activity. The first Intifada, and the resulting Oslo Process, illustrated the failure of the religious Zionists to achieve hegemonic consensus. However, their incumbent-level challenge to Israeli consensus also challenges the IDF. Political organizations that grew from religious Zionists' hegemonic project created a political power bloc among the religious Zionists, making employment of the IDF to remove settlements politically difficult. A further example of the incumbent-level challenge posed by religious Zionism is the nascent movement among religious soldiers, heeding rabbis' calls to refuse to remove settlement outposts.

E. THE POTENTIAL FOR UNILATERAL DISENGAGEMENT AND A RETURN TO HEGEMONY

The first Intifada revived the "Green Line." Israelis regained their awareness of the pre-1967 border inasmuch as most of the violence was contained on the opposite side of pre-1967 Israel. The subsequent negotiations paved the way for Israeli disengagement from the occupied territories, and illustrated the failure of religious Zionists to alter the hegemonic conceptualization of Israel. The violence of the Al-Aqsa Intifada has changed perceptions about the negotiated settlement with the Palestinians. Unprecedented violence on both sides of the Green Line diminishes its place in Israeli consensus, and discourages those on the Left who favor withdrawal. However, the desire for a secure

border favors unilateral withdrawal from much of the occupied territory, in order to isolate the majority of Israelis from the majority of Palestinians.

That Israelis still envision a border, although not exactly the original Green Line, illustrates the incompleteness of the religious Zionists' hegemonic project. That both ends of the political spectrum in Israel call for selective refusal to serve in the IDF illustrates that the original Zionist hegemonic consensus, a state that privileges Israeli Jews over other Jews, and Jewish Israelis over others in Israel, is in jeopardy. According to Israeli sociologist Gershon Shafir, "Decolonization [i.e. withdrawal] is justified by the rationale that territorial separation of Israelis and Palestinians will provide security to the former and sovereignty to the latter."¹¹ Although withdrawal is a seemingly insurmountable challenge to incumbent-level consensus, it is still in the realm of the political, not the hegemonic. That the status quo of occupation engenders hegemonic level challenges to the IDF illustrates that either the status quo must change or, as Shafir states, "Israel [will] effectively [enter] the post-Zionist era, where the traditional values of the colonial society – especially settlement and long-term military service...are likely to be seen as unnecessary burdens for individuals in a society."¹² This thesis concludes that Israel will withdraw from some of the occupied territories in order to maintain the Zionist hegemonic conceptualization of the state.

¹¹ Gershon Shafir, "Israeli Decolonization and Critical Sociology," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 3 (Spring 1996) 33.

¹² Ibid.

II. HEGEMONIC CHALLENGES TO THE IDF: YESH GVUL AND SELECTIVE REFUSAL

A. SERVICE AND SELECTIVE REFUSAL

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Israeli national mythology depicts an army of citizen-soldiers, always ready to fight in defense of a nation perpetually challenged by outside enemies, bent on its destruction. The socialist origins of the Israel Defense Forces, as well as the constant warfare and external security threats of Israel's early history, led to the Israeli public's acceptance of a militarized state, involving compulsory active military service, followed by a long period in the reserves. As political scientist Gad Barzilai states, "Service in the IDF had come to symbolize the Israeli citizen's membership in the Jewish-Zionist community."¹³ When hegemonic consensus exists regarding the just application of military force, the militarized society is not problematic. However, when the consensus about the employment of the IDF is equivocal, the IDF reflects the diversity of Israeli public opinion, thus problematizing the employment of the armed forces. Selective refusal to serve, a phenomenon that began during Israel's Lebanon War and has intensified during the two Intifadas, reflects Israel's societal divisions. This phenomenon illustrates the lack of consensus among Israelis regarding the final status of the occupied territories, the continued existence of a security threat to Israel, and the just employment of the IDF.

Selective refusal to serve differs from conscientious objection, and those who selectively refuse (commonly and heretafter known as "refuseniks") differ from conscientious objectors. According to historian of the Israeli peace movement Mordechai Bar-On, in Israel's history conscientious objectors have generally been, "political pacifists who objected to war in itself, and did not necessarily pass judgment on the specific political circumstances or merits of a particular war."¹⁴ Refuseniks, on the contrary, are usually reservists who have completed a full tour of active duty, and due to their political views, or their own negative experiences occurring during service in

¹³ Gad Barzilai, *Wars, Internal Conflicts, and Political Order; a Jewish Democracy in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996) 189.

¹⁴ Mordechai Bar-On, *In Pursuit of Peace, a History of the Israeli Peace Movement* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1996) 146.

Lebanon or the Occupied territories, have elected to refuse to serve in support of operations they deem unlawful or immoral. The first instances of selective refusal to serve in the IDF occurred during the 1982 Lebanon War. The volume of service members selectively refusing to serve rises during heightened periods of conflict, just as the debate over the proper employment of the IDF intensifies. As the conflict subsides, the debate over selective refusal becomes more academic; however, each call-up of reserves contains service members who refuse to serve in the occupied territories. In this aspect, the importance of selective refusal and its place in Israeli public discourse parallels the ebbs and flows of the Israeli peace movement. Among members of the Israeli peace movement, and within the political left in general, the view of selective refusal has been ambivalent, varying between tacit support and outright condemnation. However, the level of support for refusniks among the Israeli peace camp, as well as in the general Israeli population, has increased with each successive conflict since 1982. In this chapter, I will trace the history of selective refusal in Israel, especially the *Yesh Gvul* (alternately, “There is a Limit,” or “There is a Border”) organization, which supports refusniks. I will place it in the context of the peace movement, and furthermore, in the context of public discourse regarding the appropriate role of the IDF since 1967. Finally, I will attempt to illustrate my conclusion that selective refusal demonstrates the deep cleavages in Israeli society regarding issues as central to Israel as its borders and the level of security threats to the state.

B. HEGEMONIC CONSENSUS, “NO-CHOICE WARS,” AND 1982 AS A POINT OF DEPARTURE

Before Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon, every IDF military campaign had overwhelming support of the Israeli public. Consensus opinion held that each military action was undertaken as a last resort, in response to an outside threat to Israel’s national survival. According to Efraim Inbar of Hebrew University, “conventional academic knowledge, which I subscribe to in this case, views the wars of 1948, 1969-70, and of 1973 as purely defensive, while the wars of 1956 and 1967 are classified respectively as preventative and preemptive.”¹⁵ Inasmuch as Israeli forces were committed to defend the

¹⁵ Efraim Inbar, “The ‘No Choice War’ Debate in Israel,” in *The Conflict with the Arabs in Israeli Politics and Society Volume 7*, ed. Ian Lustick (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994) 105.

state against a perceived threat to its existence, these wars engendered no public debate over their correctness.

The 1982 invasion of Lebanon stands out as a point of departure because there was no hegemonic consensus that the *casus belli*, namely rocket attacks launched from PLO-controlled areas of Lebanon, was a legitimate threat to Israel's existence that merited the invasion of a sovereign country. Around the time of the July, 1981, Israel-PLO cease-fire, the danger posed to Israel by the Palestinian (or in Israeli parlance, "terrorist") rockets in Lebanon was a hotly contested topic among Israel's government and body politic. "Never before in Israel had a forthcoming war been so universally and fiercely debated as in 1981."¹⁶ Out of the parliamentary, ministerial, and societal debate about the appropriate employment of the IDF leading up to the 1982 war, the term "no choice war" (discussed in the introduction to this thesis as the principle of *ein brera*) became popularized and germane. According to Inbar, those who opposed military action against the PLO characterized the "no choice" distinction as, "normative – a just war. The war is not willed by Israel, but is forced upon it by its opponents."¹⁷ The five previous Israeli wars were "no choice wars," based upon the fact that Israel was forced to fight them. Initially, those who favored military intervention in Lebanon attempted to conform to this understanding of the "no choice war," and present the threat posed by PLO artillery as sufficient to justify IDF action. As the war progressed, Inbar states:

It became increasingly clearer that the war had goals beyond the elimination of the artillery threat to the northern settlements. Ousting Arafat from Beirut and the Syrians from Lebanon, where a friendly government was to be established, did not command the support of all Israelis. The government spokesman had an increasingly difficult time portraying the war as a defensive 'no choice' campaign.¹⁸

At that point, those supporting the war, especially Prime Minister Begin, attempted to reclassify the meaning of the "no choice war" debate. Begin chose to classify the 1982 war, along with the 1967 and 1956 wars as, "wars by choice." According to Inbar:

¹⁶ Barzilai, 134.

¹⁷ Inbar, 107.

¹⁸ Ibid, 108.

Their distinct common feature was, in Begin's opinion, the Israeli initiative to open hostilities. In contrast, the 'no choice war' was described as one in which the Arabs had the initiative... Therefore, Israel would be wrong in aspiring to wage 'no choice wars.' It is not wise to wait until a 'no choice war' situation develops.¹⁹

The appropriate classification of the 1982 war as a "war by choice," or a "no choice war," is not important to this study. In fact the dichotomy is false, and only serves to illustrate the hegemonic consensus that supported all of Israel's wars prior to 1982 – the general populace believed in each circumstance that war was the only option. That there was a *debate* surrounding the choice of war in 1982 however is important to the argument presented here. Previous conflicts conformed to the *ein brera* standard discussed in the introduction to this thesis, thus they conformed to the hegemonic consensus that the IDF was a defensive organization. The lack of conformity of Israeli public opinion in support of the IDF incursion into Lebanon gave rise to Israel's first instances of public opposition to military action.

It is important to note that public outcry over the conduct of the Lebanon War did not begin with the initial incursion into Lebanon. The government's campaign to convince the public that its invasion had only defensive strategic aims, even naming it "The Peace for the Galilee Campaign," served to mute public condemnation to the war in its initial stages. According to Mapam (an opposition party that was vocally anti-war) Member of the Knesset (MK) Victor Shem-Tov:

Everything must be done so that Israel wins the war... Obviously, the entire controversy surrounding the events that took place prior to the commencement of hostilities still exists. This controversy has not been expressed to date, because our soldiers are still fighting on the front lines.²⁰

The Israeli consensus, that national unity was essential during wartime, caused majority Israeli public opinion to support the war at its outset.²¹ However, as mentioned

¹⁹ Ibid, 109.

²⁰ Barzilai, 138. Quote reproduced from Shem-Tov interview with *Al Hamishmar*, June 8, 1982, p 2.

²¹ Ibid, 137. Barzilai notes that the degree to which public opinion favored the war differed according to each poll, 84% in *Dahaf*, and 66% in *Pori Survey*.

earlier, the scope of the war far exceeded the initially stated goals, and as consensus eroded, vocal, public opposition grew.

The debate over the propriety of the Lebanon campaign, before the initiation of hostilities, took place in the public, the ministerial, the military, as well as in the parliamentary arena. However, the self-censoring actions of Knesset members and ministers while hostilities were ongoing strengthened Israel's heretofore minute extra-parliamentary opposition. Peace Now, an activist group founded in 1978, but only marginally supported before 1982, attracted over 100,000 people to its July 3, 1982 rally²² and over 400,000 people to a rally in protest against the Sabra and Shatila massacres on September 22.²³ Media outlets covered the growing protest movement to illustrate their own and public dissatisfaction with the manner by which the government obscured its aims, and misled the country into a war. "Studies of extra-parliamentary opposition... state that dissatisfaction with the ability of a party to serve as a channel of communication will result in extra-party activity and the formation of protest groups."²⁴

C. SELECTIVE REFUSAL TO SERVE IN LEBANON, THE FORMATION OF YESH GVUL, & DISSATISFACTION IN THE IDF

A protest group that rose to prominence during the Lebanon war, not for its overwhelming size, but for its audacious manner of protest, was Yesh Gvul. This group consisted of reserve soldiers who refused to serve in Lebanon if activated, and their supporters. The original leaders of Yesh Gvul were two Peace Now activists who held reserve commissions in the IDF as company commanders. Ishai Mehunin and Yehuda Meltzer began their active dissent by organizing reservists to sign a petition to Defense Minister Sharon, stating:

We officers and soldiers in reserve service appeal to you not to send us to Lebanon, since we can endure no more... It is now clear that by means of this war you are trying to solve the Palestinian problem militarily, but there is no military solution to the problem of a nation... Instead of Peace

²² "Israel: Opposition to the War," *New Outlook*, July, 1982, reprinted in Hillel Schenker's *After Lebanon* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983) 17.

²³ Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984) 281.

²⁴ Barzilai, 145, advises the reader to consult *Political Action*, by S Barnes & M Kasse (Sage Publications, 1979).

in the Galilee you have brought about a war, the end of which may not yet be seen. This war, these lies, this occupation has no national consent... We took an oath to defend the peace and security of the state of Israel. We remain loyal to this oath. Therefore, we appeal to you to enable us to serve our reserve duty inside the boundaries of the state of Israel, not on the soil of Lebanon.²⁵

Initially, response to Mehunin and Meltzer's petition among IDF reservists was lukewarm. Several hundred soldiers signed; however, no soldiers actually refused mobilization. As previously stated, public opinion supported a limited operation, attempting to alleviate the security threat of rocket attacks into Israel's North. As the war dragged on, and the IDF placed Beirut under siege, small numbers of soldiers went to military jails for refusing to serve in Lebanon.²⁶ Yesh Gvul dedicated itself to supporting soldiers arrested, and raising public awareness of their acts of dissent.

Public awareness of opposition to the war's direction within the IDF came to the forefront of the war controversy in an event unrelated to the selective refusal of reservists to serve in Lebanon. When presented with the IDF plans to end their siege and forcibly enter West Beirut, colonel Eli Geva, a decorated veteran of the 1967 and 1973 wars, and commander of an armored brigade engaged since the outbreak of hostilities, "struggled with his conscience and decided that he would have to relinquish command of his brigade."²⁷ In planning sessions for the Lebanon war, Geva was one of the IDF's most outspoken critics, however he dutifully commanded his brigade in pursuit of the war's aims until mid-July, 1982. The specter that, "'Going into Beirut means killing whole families,'"²⁸ so upset him that he could not reconcile his conscience with his actions. In an effort to cause Geva to reconsider, he had audiences with the Northern Front Commander, Major General Amir Drori, the IDF Chief of General Staff, General Rafael Eitan, as well as Defense Minister Sharon and Prime Minister Begin. According to *Ha'Aretz* correspondents Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, after his audiences with the architects of the Lebanon war failed to convince him to remain in command of his

²⁵ Bar-On, 147, citing Ishai Mehunin's reproduction of the original letter in *Limits of Obedience*, 175.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Schiff, *Lebanon*, 215.

²⁸ Ibid, 216, recounting Geva's interview with IDF General Rafael Eitan.

brigade, the IDF General Staff informed Geva that he “should not return to Beirut and that his service in the IDF was terminated forthwith. When it became public in late July, the ‘Geva affair’ was an instant cause célèbre, revealing as it did the depth of misgivings within the IDF.”²⁹

Although the peace camp and the Israeli left championed Eli Geva’s cause – an active duty leader discharged for acting upon his conscience – the matter of reservists’ selective refusal to serve was problematic for them. As stated earlier, anti-war parliamentarians, ministers, and political parties expressed disapproval of any mass galvanization of opposition to the war efforts as long as the IDF was fighting. Although this position softened, especially in the left parties, such as Ratz and Mapam, leading figures of Israeli politics generally refrained from open criticism of the IDF. The reaction of the largest non-governmental peace organization, Peace Now, was more interesting due to the equivocal support it gave the refuseniks.

Peace Now, although determined to bring the legitimacy of the war into the public forum, did not want to marginalize itself by overt law breaking. As Bar-On states:

The argument for showing restraint was that once Peace Now had broken the law it would not only move outside the national mainstream but also legitimize law breaking by its opponents on the right, who might have benefited more than the left from such tactics.³⁰

Many of the original refusenik leaders, such as Mehunin, Meltzer, and Major Benny Barabash, all leaders of Yesh Gvul, were initiated into the peace camp through their activities in Peace Now.³¹ As such, during the Lebanon war, the Peace Now leadership addressed the issue of its ties to Yesh Gvul and selective refusal in general as follows:

Philosophically there certainly is a limit to obedience, and circumstances may be created in which we too may decide to disobey... [However] despite its bitter critique of the invasion of Lebanon, Peace Now does not think that this limit has been reached. Yesh Gvul is not our rival. In many ways they are a piece of our flesh and bones...individuals may have the

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Bar-On, 148.

³¹ Ibid and Shenker, 16.

right to resist orders they feel they cannot live with, as long as they are ready to pay the price. But as a movement, as a collective, Peace Now is not ready to adopt disobedience as its official line.³²

The act of selective refusal was conscious law breaking in order to protest what refuseniks believed was officially sanctioned law breaking, the war of aggression in Lebanon. According to Barzilai, “Since many of [Yesh Gvul’s] members defined themselves as Zionists, they recognized the legitimacy of the regime and the government. Thus they were willing to suffer the lawful penalties imposed for draft-dodging.”³³ Refusenik acceptance of prosecution and punishment for disobedience during the Lebanon war highlights what they believed to be the paradox of that war, namely, that in a military conceived with the concept of *ein brera* – that enemies force Israel to go to war, waging aggressive war was unacceptable.³⁴ As the Lebanon war dragged on and ignominiously ended, the notion that the government violated the social contract, through its misuse of the IDF, gained credence. As a result, the propriety of selective refusal received attention in the debate that continued after hostilities in Lebanon ended.

D. FROM LEBANON TO THE INTIFADA

When hostilities in Lebanon ended, creeping lethargy entered the Israeli peace movement. According to Bar-On, in the absence of conflict, “activists started to wonder whether the movement’s mission had ended, or whether despite past successes the movement had finally been defeated by the sad realities of the absence of peace and the continuing occupation.”³⁵ Although the numbers of those refusing to serve in the Lebanon “security zone” fell, the issue of selective refusal did not fade from the public consciousness, and Yesh Gvul did much to keep the debate alive. Bar-On states, “Perhaps its most significant contribution was the publication of a book, [written by Ishai Mehunin, who became one of the leading intellectuals of the refusenik movement] *The Limits of Obedience*, which sparked a lively debate in the media concerning moral and

³² Ibid, 148-9.

³³ Barzilai, 145.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Bar-On, 193.

political principles.”³⁶ However, the debate over selective refusal was not limited to the literary world. Individual reservists, refusing to serve not only in Lebanon, but also in the occupied territories, made the issue of selective refusal much more mainstream, and made Yesh Gvul’s leadership leading figures of the Israeli peace camp by the time the Intifada began. As historian Reuven Kaminer states, “It could be said that even if the group had known that the Intifada was on its way, it could not have prepared itself better.”³⁷

Although Yesh Gvul took to the issue of selective refusal to serve in the occupied territories with aplomb, as a group, it did not seek to expand its mission to include the occupied territories. Only after the IDF jailed six reservists in February 1986 for their refusal to serve in the territories did Yesh Gvul adopt an official position, supporting refusal to participate in the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.³⁸ In March 1986, Yesh Gvul released a position paper expressing its support for those who refused to serve in the occupied territories. That this position paper bore striking similarities and made many references to its initial pronouncements regarding selective refusal to serve in Lebanon was no accident. It stated:

We have taken an oath to defend the welfare of the State of Israel and we remain faithful to that oath. Therefore we request that you [the Prime Minister] permit us to desist from participation in operations related to oppression and the occupation in the territories.³⁹

Yesh Gvul reaffirmed its patriotic commitment to defend Israel, but linked war in Lebanon and the continuing occupation of territories gained in 1967 as the same category of misuse of the IDF. That Yesh Gvul remained organized at a time when the mainstream Israeli peace camp was not, and that its position vis à vis service in the occupied territories was timely almost to the point of prescience, made Yesh Gvul and selective refusal well suited to enter the mainstream of national debate during the Intifada.

³⁶ Ibid, 228.

³⁷ Reuven Kaminer, *The Politics of Protest, the Israeli Peace Movement and the Palestinian Intifada*, (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 1996), 66.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid, 67, reproduction of Yesh Gvul leaflet, March 1986.

E. THE FIRST INTIFADA

Yesh Gvul's protest against service in the occupied territories even prior to the outbreak of violence in December 1987 that became the Intifada gave the selective refusal movement a new degree of prestige and legitimacy in the peace camp. Much of this newfound prestige came from the fact that Yesh Gvul's position was unequivocal, that serving in the occupied territories was beyond the scope of Israel's security needs.⁴⁰ Legitimacy derived, as in the refuseniks' stand on the Lebanon war, from the fact that members had already served in the IDF, confronted the moral and legal dilemma posed by selective refusal, and accepted the consequences of their disobedience.

As the Intifada continued, the debate over the morality and legality of the application of force, by the IDF, in suppressing the uprising reinvigorated the paradox raised by Yesh Gvul's selective refusal to serve in Lebanon. According to Bar-On, "Rabin's directive to 'break bones'... and other harsh measures being used by the IDF in an effort to suppress the Intifada, accorded special urgency to questions concerning the legality of orders."⁴¹ In response, Yesh Gvul published its *Guide for the Perplexed*, advising soldiers of their legal and moral duty to refuse to obey unlawful orders. Kaminer describes *Guide for the Perplexed* as follows:

It featured sections from the Geneva Conventions, court judgments and statements by eminent jurists explaining that soldiers who carried out orders to beat and victimize defenseless Palestinians in their custody were not legally protected by the claim that they were only carrying out orders.⁴²

The publishing of *Guide for the Perplexed* elicited an overwhelmingly negative response from the IDF and the government, which attacked Yesh Gvul as a subversive organization. As the momentum of the selective refusal movement grew, the government began a systematic campaign against Yesh Gvul, probing its finances and investigating its members and activities. Kaminer states that after the investigation concluded, "According to press reports, it was the Attorney-General, Joseph Harish, who was

⁴⁰ Ibid, 68.

⁴¹ Bar-On, 228.

⁴² Kaminer, 68-9.

determined to bring charges against the authors and the distributors of the booklet.”⁴³ Regarding Yesh Gvul, the government held that since selective refusal was patently illegal, “they could build a case against the group inciting individual soldiers to refuse.”⁴⁴ Other organizations within the peace movement viewed the campaign against Yesh Gvul as a threat to their own right to protest. According to Bar-On:

In their response to the police campaign against Yesh Gvul, the various peace groups spoke with one voice, issuing a joint announcement that declared, “We hold different opinions on the questions of the limits of obedience and the right to refuse, but the conviction that public protest in its varied forms is the soul of democracy unites us all.”⁴⁵

At the same time as the government pursued its campaign against Yesh Gvul, the IDF attempted to further discourage selective refusal by increasing the level of punishment. In addition to the month in military prison that was the customary sentence for refusal to serve reserve duty, “the refusenik lost all compensation for reserve duty – which was usually the equivalent to his civilian salary for the period.”⁴⁶ Eliminating compensation served to increase familial and social pressure on refuseniks, however it did not thoroughly stem the tide of those unwilling to serve in the territories. according to Kaminer:

Ranking officers who wanted to raise the price a reservist would have to pay began to advocate and implement a rather simple solution: If a reservist wanted to refuse his duty, he should be sent to prison indefinitely, until he changed his mind... [The] IDF could argue that the reservist could be remobilized after a prison sentence because he had not fulfilled the minimal quota that the IDF demanded of him.⁴⁷

The IDF approach to raise the cost of selective refusal gave the movement its cause célèbre, in the case of Rami Hason. His initial refusal to serve in the West Bank turned into three jail terms between April 1988 and March 1989. Like the Eli Geva affair in Lebanon, the peace camp rallied around Hason’s cause. No less a personage in the

⁴³ Ibid, 69.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Bar-On, 229.

⁴⁶ Kaminer, 70.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

peace camp than Ratz MK Shulamit Aloni issued a statement to the *Jerusalem Post*, regarding Hason, saying, “What they are trying to do is give him life imprisonment.”⁴⁸ Sympathy for a refusenik from a Knesset member during the Intifada represents a significant departure from MK attitudes towards selective refusal during the Lebanon War. That a member of the Ratz party expressed this sympathy is not surprising, but it is significant. Together with Meretz, Ratz represents Israel’s third largest political constituency (after Labor and Likud) and form the second largest bloc of the Israeli Left. These parties are Israel’s most progressive, forming the base of the peace camp. Their leaders, like Shulamit Aloni, and Meretz’s Naomi Chazan are leading intellectuals of the Israeli Left.

By systematically attacking Yesh Gvul and the selective refusal movement, the government and the IDF did what the Lebanon war was unable to do: shifted selective refusal from the fringes to the mainstream of the Israeli peace camp. Although selective refusal was not a part of mainstream culture – its support existed solely on the left and far left – it lost much of its social stigma during the Intifada. The debate over selective refusal even entered the realm of Israel’s leftist political parties, those that had rejected the idea completely during the Lebanon war. According to Bar-On:

The debate came to a head in July 1990...[when forty-four] Ratz members published a statement of solidarity with a colleague who refused to serve and had been sent to jail... A heated session of the party’s executive committee followed, at the end of which the committee endorsed a resolution...[declaring] that the party, “opposed any refusal to serve in the territories or the encouragement of any such refusal... [but expresses] its understanding of those willing to pay the price for their conscientious objection.”⁴⁹

That a political party (albeit a leftist one) issued a declaration supporting those who selectively refused to serve in the occupied territories, and that the peace movement rallied behind Yesh Gvul, illustrate the changing perceptions of selective refusal that the Intifada foisted upon Israeli society.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 71.

⁴⁹ Bar-On, 229-30.

Although it rejected the notion of selective refusal with vehemence, the IDF was not blind to the moral and legal questions the refuseniks raised. The use of military force in the Intifada produced an interesting dynamic in civil-military relations in Israel wherein the IDF leadership was forced to urge restraint upon the civilian ministers to which it answered. When IDF generals were given ministerial directives to “break bones” or to shoot indiscriminately into crowds, the generals’ responses were usually that army operations are limited by the law.⁵⁰ The IDF leadership decried that these ministerial directives did not protect their soldiers from criminal prosecution – a position remarkably similar to that advocated in *Guide for the Perplexed*. Bar-On states that the generals further held that, “while the IDF can subdue the violence to a certain degree, at some point the government of Israel will have to deal with the problem through political measures.”⁵¹

Although the IDF actively prosecuted members who publicly advocated the same position that its leaders privately advocated among themselves and with ministers, a degree of sympathy developed within the IDF for the selective refusal. As such, the phenomenon of “gray refusal” arose. The gray refusal enabled thousands of soldiers to find ways to avoid serving in the territories without actually refusing their orders.⁵² Examples of gray refusals included medical or psychological discharges, or transfers to reserve components that did not serve in the occupied territories. Yesh Gvul supported the gray refusals as these refusals denied the IDF soldiers to serve in the occupied territories as effectively as did outright refusal. Further Yesh Gvul held that its mission was to support those who refused to serve, but the manner of refusal, like the decision to refuse, was an individual act. Since the IDF was able to call upon an adequate supply of soldiers to meet its needs, it often ignored the phenomenon of the gray refusal.⁵³

As stated earlier, although the actions of Yesh Gvul throughout the Intifada moved the debate over selective refusal from the fringes of the peace camp to its mainstream, center-leftists in Israeli society continued to reject the idea wholeheartedly.

⁵⁰ Ze’ev Schiff and Ehud Ya’ari, *Intifada, the Palestinian Uprising – Israel’s Third Front*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 137.

⁵¹ Ibid, 136.

⁵² Bar-On, 229.

Leaders of the Mapam and United Kibbutz Movement parties appealed personally to refuseniks in their parties. One argument that resonated with left-wing soldiers was that the presence of humane, decent soldiers restrained unauthorized cruel or barbarous acts by chauvinists and right-wing soldiers.⁵⁴ Politicians on the left feared that should the appeal of selective refusal spread, the IDF would be irreparably weakened and leave Israel unable to defend itself. According to Ratz MK Yossi Sarid, “Refusal might spread and create a split that would undermine democracy and result in military weakness that could encourage aggression... I have no assurances from Saddam Hussein or Hafez El-Assad that they will be impressed by our moral rectitude.”⁵⁵ These challenges from the left, although compelling, did not end the phenomenon of selective refusal.

As happened in the end of the Lebanon war, the conclusion of the first Intifada saw a diminution in the numbers and prominence of refuseniks. This phenomenon receded to the background during the years of the Oslo Peace process. As the Al-Aqsa Intifada grew, selective refusal once again gained prominence in Israeli civil-military relations, and once again moved towards the mainstream.

F. SELECTIVE REFUSAL AND THE AL-AQSA INTIFADA

The outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000 created another peak in the volume of reservists selectively refusing to serve in the occupied territories. This newest insurrection has borne out the trend that selective refusal is moving into the mainstream of Israeli public discourse. In addition to Yesh Gvul, groups of refuseniks such as Seruv (Refuse) and New Profile have arisen to support refuseniks. These groups have more ambitious political aims, such as dismantling settlements, and a mission “to turn Israel into a civil society.”⁵⁶ Yesh Gvul’s website and current handbook for soldiers contains its traditional admonitions regarding the illegality of many IDF actions.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Kaminer, 135.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 136.

⁵⁶ Josef Algazy, “They Also Serve Who Refuse to Serve,” *Ha’Artez*, 6 September 2001; in “Israel – Number of Conscientious Objectors to IDF Service Said Growing,” FBIS Document GMP20010906000, 6 September 2001.

However, in its current literature, Yesh Gvul has specifically targeted many of the actions most vehemently protested by Palestinians and decried in international media:

When you take part in extrajudicial killings (“liquidation” in the army’s terms); When you take part in demolishing residential homes; When you open fire at unarmed civilians or residential homes; When you uproot orchards; When you interdict food supplies or medical treatments – You are taking part in actions defined in international conventions and Israeli law as war crimes.⁵⁷

Additionally, Yesh Gvul has abandoned one aspect of the political neutrality that governed its support of selective refusal. Current Yesh Gvul public information states that the money spent by IDF in the protection of settlements could better serve Israel’s infrastructure or social services, ending with the refrain, “End the occupation, public allotments to the disadvantaged, not to settlements!”⁵⁸ Finally, Yesh Gvul relates the violence against Israeli civilians in the Al-Aqsa Intifada to the continued occupation, advising soldiers to, “Ask yourself whether your actions in the course of your military service...merely fuel the enmity and the acts of violence between us and our Palestinian neighbors? You can stop the violence that breeds terrorism.”⁵⁹

One of the newer refusenik organizations, Seruv, takes a more activist position in its members’ reason for selective refusal. It states, “We hereby declare that we shall not continue to fight this War of the Settlements.”⁶⁰ Seruv’s refusal to serve in the occupied territories represents a new development in selective refusal. Like Yesh Gvul’s assertion that the occupation is directing Israeli funding towards the settlements in the occupied territories, away from Israel, Seruv’s argument against service adds a political dimension to the moral argument put forth in the original instances of selective refusal. Combining the political aspect to the moral argument for selective refusal adds the issue of service in the occupied territories to the list of reinforcing cleavages that became apparent between leftist/secular and rightist/religious Israel during the Oslo period. In this case, the

⁵⁷ “Yesh Gvul English Web Page,” available online, <http://www.yesh-gvul.org/english.html> [02 March, 2002].

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ “Seruv English Web Page,” available online, <http://www.seruv.org.il/defaulteng.asp> [12 March, 2002].

political aspect of the debate actually widens rather than narrows the base of support for selective refusal.

Evidence of the broadening incumbent-level consensus for selective refusal is illustrated in many instances throughout the Al-Aqsa Intifada. For example at a peace rally in February 2002, participants included, “some of the army reservists who have refused to serve in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories, Green Line: Students for Borders, the Meretz Party, Labour Party doves, the Kibbutz Movement...Yesh Gvul, and Gush Shalom.”⁶¹ That Meretz and the left wing of the Labour Party now openly participate in peace rallies with refuseniks and their organizations illustrates the broadening consensus that selective refusal has received in the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Feelings of frustration among the Israeli left with the heightened levels of violence and what they perceive to be the Sharon government’s retrenching for continued conflict has generated support for the selective refusal movement. In an article in *Ha’Aretz*, former Attorney-General Michael Ben-Yair, a leading intellectual of the Labor party wrote:

[Occupation] is the product of our choice. We enthusiastically chose to become a colonial society, ignoring international treaties, expropriating lands, transferring settlers from Israel to the occupied territories, engaging in theft and finding justification for these activities... It is against this background that one must view the refusal of IDF reservist officers and soldiers to serve in the territories... Their refusal to serve is an act of conscience that is justified and recognized in every democratic regime. History’s verdict will be that their act of refusal was the act that restored our moral backbone.⁶²

Although outright support for selective refusal from such prominent figures is rare, expressions of understanding and “empathy” are becoming commonplace, especially among Israel’s left-wing Knesset members. Meretz, the largest left-wing party represented in the current Knesset, has no official position regarding refusal. (This is a huge step away from the outright condemnation of refusal in the Lebanon War and the qualified condemnation during the first Intifada.) The party has no official position

⁶¹ George S Hishmeh, “An Arab Offer that Demands Immediate Action,” *Amman Jordan Times*, 20 February 2002; in “Jordanian Columnist says Israel, US Should Accept Saudi Crown Prince’s Offer,” FBIS Document GMP20020222000234, 20 February, 2002.

⁶² Michael Ben-Yair, “The War’s Seventh Day,” [article online] *Ha’Aretz*, 03 March, 2002 (accessed 12 March, 2002); available from “Seruv English Web Page,” <http://www.seruv.org.il>.

because, “Meretz...finds itself in a state of slight confusion when the refusal to serve issue is raised.”⁶³ Party leaders are now debating the degree to which they support selective refusal, rather than if they support it at all.

The Israeli government still rejects selective refusal and sentences those who refuse to serve to prison. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs points out that Israel disciplines refusniks with relatively light sentences,⁶⁴ compared with those received in the United States for refusal to serve in the Gulf and Vietnam wars. This statement reflects Israel’s sensitivity to the heightened scrutiny the issue of selective refusal has brought to its administration of the occupied territories. Whether or not the increased violence directed against Israeli citizens during the Al-Aqsa Intifada has leavened or weakened support for selective refusal is yet unknown. Increased casualty tolls have made Israelis less sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. That Palestinian attacks occur on both sides of the Green Line weakens the position that occupation is the root cause of the uprising, and that the IDF incursion is unjustified. In many ways, the violence of the Al-Aqsa Intifada has hardened Israeli attitudes towards Palestinians. Polling data from Israel after the start of the Al-Aqsa Intifada shows greater support for a heavier hand in dealing with the Palestinians, as shown in the growing support among hardliners for Benjamin Netanyahu versus Ariel Sharon. This trend does not reflect a re-marginalization of selective refusal in particular, but rather, a marginalization of the Israeli left and the peace camp in general. The importance of selective refusal in Israeli society remains yet to be determined.

G. SELECTIVE REFUSAL IN CONTEXT

“As a democracy in uniform,” most of Israel requires most of its Jewish citizens to serve in the armed forces. As a result, the IDF reflects the range of political positions in Jewish-Israeli society.⁶⁵ Before the Lebanon war, every endeavour of the IDF had the

⁶³ Yossi Verter, “Meretz Refuses to Take Stand on Soldiers’ Refusal to Serve,” *Ha’Aretz*, 18 Mar 2002, available online, <http://www.haaretz.co.il> [25 March, 2002].

⁶⁴ State of Israel, Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and International Relations Department, “Israel’s Policy on Selective Conscientious Objectors,” 25 May, 1993, available online, <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il> [25 March 2002].

⁶⁵ Barzilai, 143.

support of hegemonic consensus, thus the divisions in the Israeli polity did not factor into the conduct of the war. Equivocal support of the Lebanon war became public protest as the war dragged on. Parliamentary and political party avenues, however, closed to protest, thus dissent was driven into the arena of non-governmental actors. Among the most novel modes of protest that arose was selective refusal to serve the IDF in support of action perceived to be unjustified. Selective refusal was a fringe element of dissent during the Lebanon war, but came in from the margins during the first Intifada. The moral argument that military force in the occupied territories was unjust became more compelling to soldiers ordered to participate in crackdowns, thus generating support for this type of dissent in the peace camp. By the Al-Aqsa Intifada, selective refusal entered the mainstream of Israeli political discourse, as another of the issues dividing Israeli society between right and left.

III. THE HEGEMONIC PROJECT OF RELIGIOUS ZIONISM

A. FROM RELIGIOUS ZIONISM TO JEWISH FUNDAMENTALISM

As described in the introduction of this thesis, Israeli identity is the product of the Zionist hegemonic project. Viewed through the cultural lens of the founders of Zionism, the land of Israel had symbolic value, inasmuch as it was recognizable to all Jews of the world as their place of origin, however it had no special religious significance. Apart from the mainstream was a small group of Zionists for whom the land of Israel was religiously significant, for whom Zionism was not a nationalist movement, but a religious reawakening, hastening the eschatological prophecies of the Jewish Bible. This chapter is a case study of religious Zionism as an alternative hegemonic project. It describes the attempt to reconstruct the hegemonic conceptualization of Israel in religious Zionist terms.

Israeli military victory in 1967, with its concomitant acquisition of territory rich with symbolic meaning for observant Jews, was a watershed event. Religious Zionists were invigorated, equating Israeli conquest of territory in 1967 with the divinely mandated Israelite conquest of the biblical era. The notion that Israelis were creating an exceptional era of Jewish history, hastening the coming of the messiah through their national enterprise, gained credence among those seeking explanation for the IDF's "miraculous" victory. Through military victory, religious Zionism transitioned from a fringe ideology to a significant movement on the right of the Israeli political spectrum. Religious Zionists became the leaders in the settlement of the occupied territories. Through lobbying, grass roots political organizing, and ostentatious (often extralegal) political activity, fundamentalist Jewish Zionists have consolidated political support for their settlement activities among the leaders and voters of Israel's center-right. Growing and operating in parallel with center-right religious activists is a clique of fundamentalist Jewish zealots, on the far right of the Israeli political spectrum. These people are responsible for much of the anti-Palestinian settler violence and threats and acts against the Israeli peace camp. Further, these are the people who threaten armed insurrection should the IDF attempt to remove settlements.

Inasmuch as a significant aspect of religious Zionist ideology is the sanctity of the land of Israel, the growth of the movement since 1967 problematizes any potential removal of settlements. In this instance, the historic case of Yamit is illuminating. IDF removal of the Yamit settlements in 1982 became a cause célèbre for fundamentalist Jews. That the government of Israel would willingly exchange land for a final peace settlement with any of its Arab neighbors was a chilling realization for those for whom the territorial integrity of the land of Israel was the Will of God. Action in Yamit inspired religious Zionists to increase the pace of settlement in the West Bank and Gaza, and create infrastructure, binding settlements to pre-1967 Israel, inexorably raising the costs of any possible withdrawal from the occupied territories. This case study demonstrates that the attempts to redefine Israeli hegemonic consensus in religious Zionist terms has largely failed. Religious Zionists have raised the cost of withdrawal from the occupied territories to be almost prohibitive on the incumbent-level. However, that significant pressure to withdraw from the territories still exists illustrates the religious Zionists' failure to attain hegemony.

B. EARLY RELIGIOUS ZIONISM

Mainstream Zionism was never a religious movement. The original Zionists were secular Europeans, either bourgeois or socialist in their outlook; their quest to establish a Jewish state was a nationalist one, rather than a religious one. Of the significance of Israel, versus other potential locations for the Jewish state, Theodore Herzl wrote:

Is Palestine or Argentina [for example] preferable? The society will take whatever it is given and whatever Jewish public opinion favors... Palestine is our unforgettable historic homeland. The very name would be a marvelously effective rallying cry.⁶⁶

Thus for Zionists, the land was significant only inasmuch as it held sentimental, and therefore recruiting and fundraising value among Diaspora Jews. In contrast to the unreligious (or irreligious, in the case of socialists and communists) outlook of the Zionists, a school of thought began that melded Zionist dreams for statehood with Jewish

⁶⁶ Theodore Herzl, quoted in Arthur Herzberg, *The Zionist Idea* (New York: Meridian Books, 1960) 232.

eschatology. This school, religious Zionism, viewed the Jewish return to the land of Israel as the dawn of the messianic era. Zionists, no matter their ideological stripe, were acting in God's will to bring about Jewish redemption. The intellectual father of religious Zionism, Rabbi Avraham Isaac Hachohen Kook, did not view Palestine as a public relations tool of the Zionist enterprise. According to Rabbi Kook:

To regard Eretz Israel [the Land of Israel] as merely a tool for establishing our national... is a sterile notion; it is unworthy of the holiness of Eretz Israel... Deep in the heart of every Jew in its purest and holiest recesses, there blazes the fire of Israel.⁶⁷

According to Rabbi Kook's formula, secular Zionists were not dangerous false prophets by virtue of their disregard for Jewish practice, but rather, they were the tools of the Divine redemption of the Jews. He wrote:

An outsider may wonder: How can seeming unbelievers be moved by this life force, not merely to nearness to the universal God, but even toward authentic Jewish life... But this is no mystery to anyone whose heart is deeply at one with the soul of the Jewish people and who knows its marvelous nature. The source of this Power is in the Power of God, in the everlasting glory of life.⁶⁸

Rabbi Kook thus inverted the mainstream Zionist thought regarding the centrality of Israel in their enterprise. According to University of Pennsylvania professor Ian Lustick, Rabbi Kook and his followers further postulated that Zionist "exposure to the Holy Land, complemented by their [religious Zionists'] own sensitive and tolerant persuasion, would eventually lead the nonreligious Zionist majority to acceptance of the halacha and understanding of the redemptive meaning of Zionism."⁶⁹

C. FROM MARGINAL PHILOSOPHY TO ENTRENCHED MOVEMENT

By designating him Chief Rabbi of Palestine, the British granted Rabbi Kook a measure of power and a highly visible pulpit. However, his religious philosophy of

⁶⁷ Abraham Isaac Hachohen Kook, quoted in Arthur Herzberg, *The Zionist Idea* (New York: Meridian Books, 1960) 419-21.

⁶⁸ Ibid, P 422.

⁶⁹ Ian Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1988) 33.

Zionism did not attract a significant following during the Yishuv era. According to Israeli historian Ehud Sprinzak:

Religious Zionists were part of the political, economic, and cultural fabric of the country, with their own variegated semi-private educational system. For many years, these people suffered from a major cultural drawback: as observant orthodox Jews...they were outsiders. A main feature of modern Zionism had been its secularism and anti-clericalism... The Zionist maxim of *Sheilat Hagalut* (the negation of the Diaspora) implied for the vast majority of Israeli Zionists the rejection of orthodox Judaism, its practitioners, and its symbols... [Religious Zionists] were part of all the exciting developments.⁷⁰

The religious Zionist community paralleled the development of other ideological communities of the Yishuv/early statehood era. The B'nai Akiva Youth movement indoctrinated young religious Zionists in the fashion of Betar for the revisionists or Maccabi and Hapoel for the laborites. Religious Zionists sponsored their own kibbutz movement, Hapoel Hamizrahi. The National Religious Party (NRP or Mafdal) became the political organization of religious Zionists. Throughout the years of Labor hegemony in Israel, the NRP maintained its significance by creating a niche role for itself as a junior partner in Labor governments. As junior partner, the NRP supported Labor's foreign and economic policies in return for concessions on religious and personal status matters.⁷¹

At the same time that the NRP created its niche in national politics, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook maintained the ideological essence of his father, Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook's messianic philosophy. At the Yeshiva Merkaz Harav, he continued to preach about the mystical connection between the land and the people of Israel, and about the eschatological mission of the State of Israel. Sprinzak states:

Until the 1950's Merkaz Harav was a small and unimportant religious seminary in Jerusalem. The death of Rav Kook [the elder], in 1935, had left the yeshiva without a leader... Starting in the mid-fifties, Yeshivat Merkaz Harav slowly became the spiritual center of the new approach to religious Zionism. The new students listened attentively to the idealistic

⁷⁰ Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1991), 48.

⁷¹ Mark Tessler, "The Political Right in Israel: Its Origins, Growth, and Prospects," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 15, Issue 2, Winter 1986, P 12.

and nationalist sermons of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda and to his very Israeli interpretation of his father's books.⁷²

Students at Merkaz Harav came exclusively from the B'nai Akiva youth movement, however they did not accept their role as a marginal element of the Zionist enterprise. Through their combination of Zionism and idealism, they developed two ambitions: to undo their parents' humiliation brought on by their second-class role in building the Jewish state, and to outperform the secular Zionists.⁷³ According to the teachings of the Rabbis Kook, all Jews would eventually come to realize the truth, that the State of Israel is not a normal state, but rather, the dawn of the messianic age. By this reasoning, the young religious Zionists of Merkaz Harav were not marginal players, but rather the spiritual vanguard of the Jewish people. According to Sprinzak, several of the most dedicated of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook's devotees, in 1952, formed the "*Gahelet* (embers), which stood for *Gariin Halutzei Lomdei Torah* (a pioneering nucleus of Torah students)."⁷⁴ This nucleus of ideologically motivated students became the original leaders of the most significant fundamentalist Jewish movement, Gush Emunim (Bloc or Community of the Faithful). Thus through Gush Emunim, the nationalistic, idealistic, and mystical teachings of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, are dominant motifs of the Jewish fundamentalist movement. An important Gahelet ritual – the Israeli Independence Day pilgrimage to Merkaz Harav to listen to Rabbi Zvi Yehuda's sermon – took on mythic significance at the Independence Day sermon in 1967, three weeks before the outbreak of war. Whereas the prospect of imminent war with Egypt plagued most Israelis with a sense of foreboding,⁷⁵ Rabbi Zvi Yehuda's sermon was fervently nationalist. He sermonized:

Nineteen years ago on the very night that the decision of the United Nations to create the State of Israel was handed down, as the entire people rejoiced... I was unable to join their happiness. I sat alone – quiet and depressed. In those very first hours I was not able to accept what had been done, that terrible news, that indeed "my land they have divided" had occurred! Yes, where is our Hebron – have we forgotten it?! And where

⁷² Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, 49.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 35.

is our Schehem, and our Jericho, where – will we forget them?! And all of Transjordan – it is all ours, every single clod of earth, each little bit, every part of the land is part of the land of God – is it in our power to surrender even one millimeter of it?!⁷⁶

The significance of this sermon is not only in its timing, which for the Gahalet, after victory in the Six Day War and the attending territorial windfall, appeared to be prophecy. It is further significant because it illustrates the expansionist ideology imbued in the young leaders of Gush Emunim and the settlement movement, which began almost immediately after the military victory in 1967.

D. EARLY SETTLEMENTS AND EARLY SETTLER ACTIVITY

The first settlement activity took place in the West Bank town of Hebron. Religious Zionists set their sights on Hebron for both religious and historical reasons. Jews (and Arabs) revere Hebron as the biblical site of the Tomb of the Patriarchs. Further, Hebron was the site of an original Zionist enclave in Israel, evacuated after rioting and inter-communal violence in 1929. Finally, Hebron was also an important Palestinian town, thus the establishment of a Jewish settlement there, for fundamentalist Israelis, symbolized Zionist dominance throughout the land of Israel. Sprinzak describes the original post-1967 religious Zionist foray into Hebron as follows:

In 1968 Rabbi Moshe Levinger, one of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda's most devoted students, led seventy-nine followers in the first Jewish return to Hebron. The operation began in illicitly moving into the Park Hotel in Hebron... This became the model for Gush Emunim's illicit operations. The unauthorized settlement was followed by a declaration that the settlers would never leave, and finally by an agreement to be moved to a nearby military compound. It involved tremendous dedication, great political pressure, and intense lobbying. Soon the government decided to establish Kiryat Arba, a new Jewish city next to Hebron.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord*, 36 quotes, "From the text of notes to the address of Zvi Yehuda Kook, published as 'This is the State of which the Prophets Dreamed,' *Nekuda*, No. 86, April 26, 1985, PP 6-7." (Footnote 46, P 204).

⁷⁷ Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, 47.

Gush Emunim's action to create Kiryat Arba, near Hebron, and Elon Moreh, in 1973, near Nablus,⁷⁸ illustrates a pattern of illicit activity and confrontation with the Israeli government. However, the government did not oppose all of the early settlements in the West Bank. Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon planned the first government-sponsored settlement in the West Bank in July 1967. His plan called for the establishment of settlements in Gush Etzion and the Latrun Salient, abandoned to the Jordanian Arab Legion in 1948. According to Israeli urban planner, and former Jerusalem Deputy Mayor, Meron Benvenisti:

Allon argued that the permanent borders of Israel must be defensible from a strategic point of view and must depend on permanent topographical obstacles that can withstand the onslaught of modern land armies... Such security borders must also, he argued, be political borders; the border would be political only if Jewish settlements existed along its length.⁷⁹

That the Labor government couched its settlement activity in terms of the quest for defensible borders, rather than in terms of reuniting Jews with sacred land, did not bother religious Zionists. Rather, the government's ignorance of its role in hastening redemption was part of Kookist theology. As in 1948, the 1967 war ended with a cessation of hostilities rather than a comprehensive peace agreement, thus most Israelis believed that the IDF kept the peace through the maintenance of defensible borders.

The initial military defeats of the 1973 Yom Kippur war illustrated the folly of creating a static defense, based on topographical features. The Egyptian army easily breached the vaunted Bar-Lev Line in the Sinai, for example. The folly of using settlements as integral defensive outposts in modern combat thus imperiled the settlement enterprise. As such, the Israeli government returned to its role of reluctant partner in settlement activity after 1973. From 1973 until the first Likud government in 1977, Gush Emunim, through its settlement organization Amana, became the leading settlement agency in the West Bank.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Meron Benvenisti, *The West Bank Data Project* (Washington DC: the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1984) 51.

Whereas, all Allon settlements are agricultural collectives, following the Labor Zionist model,⁸⁰ Gush Emunim pioneered a different type of settlement, the Yishuv Kehillati (Community Village). Sociologist David Newman characterizes the Yishuv Kehillati as follows:

Instead of a cooperative framework and home-based agriculture or industry, each individual would be allowed to establish his own private factory on land rented from the settlement, or even to commute to his job in town. Virtually all of the highland area of the West Bank is within an hour's journey of either Jerusalem or Tel Aviv, and the majority of settlers have their own cars... The Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency rejected the concept as a viable settlement alternative. Nevertheless, Gush Emunim adopted it as the most appropriate means of attaining their objectives.⁸¹

In traditional, labor Zionist parlance, settlement connoted agrarian, communal living. The agrarian lifestyle and its attendant Labor-Zionist ideology, did not appeal to Gush Emunim's urban middle-class white-collar members.⁸² The Likud electoral victory in 1977 became a political windfall for the Gush Emunim settlement activity inasmuch as Likud was likewise not committed to Labor ideology. Under Likud leadership, the Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency recognized the Yishuv Kehillati as a legitimate settlement type in 1977. According to Benvenisti:

The recognition of the Yishuv Kehillati as a legitimate "pioneering settlement" was not merely an ideological watershed. It meant that Gush Emunim would be eligible for Zionist financial support. All "recognized" types of settlement receive financial aid in the form of grants and very cheap loans... The aid continues until the settlement reaches a level of self-sufficiency and is capable of paying back the loans... The aid is funneled through a central settlement movement, which coordinates development projects and tends to become a strong economic and political power base.⁸³

The availability of low-cost housing loans to construct new housing in bedroom communities surrounding Jerusalem became an attractive option not only for those

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ David Newman, "Gush Emunim Settlement Type in the West Bank," *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 8, no. 1 (1981), 33.

⁸² Benvenisti, 53.

⁸³ Ibid.

ideologically committed to settlement throughout the land of Israel, but also for those seeking a suburban lifestyle. Thus with the approval of the Yishuv Kehillati, settlement construction and occupation increased dramatically.⁸⁴ In order to distribute money for housing loans and grants to build infrastructure for the settlements, Gush Emunim created another powerful organization, the Yesha Council.

The ideological children of Merkaz Harav, through Gush Emunim, revitalized the moribund religious Zionist ideology, and created a movement. As discussed earlier, Gush Emunim became the parent organization to Amana, in charge of developing new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, and Yesha, the council of existing settlements in the occupied territories. Concomitant throughout this time Gush Emunim also began to exercise its voice in the Israeli political arena through the traditional vehicle of religious Zionists, the NRP. As stated earlier, since 1948, the NRP served as a coalition partner with Labor governments, supporting Labor policies of social democracy and foreign policy. As with almost every other facet of religious Zionism, NRP behavior began to change after 1967.⁸⁵ The leaders of Gush Emunim formed a “Young Guard,” within the NRP, and began to influence the party away from partnership with Labor, and towards a policy of Jewish fundamentalism and territorial maximalism. According to University of Wisconsin political science professor Mark Tessler:

Thus viewing territorial maximalism as a religious duty, they endorsed Likud’s long-standing policy toward the West Bank and Gaza, and denounced Labor’s continuing advocacy of territorial compromise... Some NRP members began to assert at this time that retention and settlement of the territories would deepen the spiritual character of Israeli society generally and hasten the coming of the Messiah... The NRP’s growing identification of religious goals with territorial maximalism has led it to play a leading role in political movements organized on behalf of increased Jewish settlement on the West Bank and in Gaza.⁸⁶

Taking ideological direction from Gush Emunim, the settler movement and the NRP acted symbiotically to further interest in settlement building. Their support of the Likud government in 1977 created opportunities to expand settlements in the West Bank.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Tessler, “The Political Right In Israel: Its Origins, Growth, and Prospects,” 32.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 32-3.

Settlement growth fueled support for the settler movement, inasmuch as even non-ideological settlers benefited from Yesha monetary support. Religious Zionist actions take the form of a Gramscian war of position, an attempt to alter hegemony across the institutions of civil society, waging an ideological and cultural struggle in addition to a political and economic one. Through their war of position, religious Zionism began to occupy a major portion of the center-right of the Israeli body politic.

E. YAMIT

Although settlement activity in the West Bank began almost immediately after its 1967 conquest, settlement of the less religiously significant occupied regions, Gaza and the Sinai, did not begin immediately. As mentioned in Section A of this chapter, in 1975, the Israeli government planned and organized settlements in the Rafah Salient, a series of cooperative farms (Kibbutzim and Moshavim) with the city of Yamit as an administrative hub on the Mediterranean coast. Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling states that, “Many settlers of Yamit and Sinai were not motivated primarily by nationalism, but rather by quality of life, financial well being, and the availability of relatively inexpensive housing.”⁸⁷ The government envisioned the Yamit region as a hub for export agriculture, and further, held to the Labor Zionist ethos that settlement of the hinterland was essential to the defense of Israeli territory.

The election of Menachem Begin to the post of Prime Minister in 1977, with the territorial maximalist agenda of the Likud party, further encouraged the religious settlers of the West Bank. Begin’s rhetoric aped that of the Land of Israel Movement, thus his government’s entering negotiations with the Egyptian government of Anwar Sadat in 1978 surprised most Jewish fundamentalists. For the majority of Israelis, the prospect of exchanging the sparsely populated Sinai Peninsula for long-term peace with Egypt was very alluring. That the people of Yamit would have to return to Israel, or that Israel would voluntarily cede territory, was inconsequential compared with the benefits of normalized relations with Israel’s largest and most contentious neighbor. According to

⁸⁷ Baruch Kimmerling, “Exchanging Territories for Peace: A Macrosociological Approach,” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 23, no. 1 (January 1987), 28.

Sprinzak, voluntarily yielding territory was unacceptable for the Jewish fundamentalist movement for whom:

The fight was not just for Eretz Israel, but also for the Torah of Israel and for the people of Israel. The retreat from Sinai and the evacuation of Jewish settlements were considered acts of sin, retreats from the course of redemption.⁸⁸

For fundamentalists, the prospect of Israeli retreat from the Sinai imbued the settlements there with the same religious significance as settlements in the West Bank. The settlers' mission was no longer a selfish profit seeking, nor was it secular Zionist pioneering, but rather a holy act, bringing the Jewish people closer to redemption. In the introduction to the special issue of *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* devoted to Yamit, editor and psychologist Erik Cohen describes the Gush Emunim infiltration of Yamit as follows:

The Yamit area began to be penetrated by new "settlers" under the leadership of *Gush Emunim*... In contrast to the earlier Israeli settlers, these intruders – technically operating illegally – were devoted to preventing the retreat and removal at any cost. They established the first of their illegal settlements, Atzmona, immediately following the signing of the peace treaty in March, 1979.⁸⁹

Under the leadership of Gush Emunim, Israelis opposed to returning the Sinai to Egypt formed the Movement to Stop the Withdrawal from the Sinai (MSW). Although the MSW membership did not exclusively contain Fundamentalist Jews of the Gush Emunim ideological stripe – many members were settlers from Yamit, or Kibbutz movement patrons of the agricultural settlements in the Rafah salient – the organizational strength of the MSW came from the fundamentalists. Fundamentalist Jewish ideology thus became essential to the MSW. According to psychologist Nuri Kilot, although the Sinai itself was religiously insignificant, the contest to stop withdrawal became a religious struggle occasioned by a fundamentalist dogma that "can be termed the 'sacredness of settlement,' which, stated simply, held that Jewish settlements could not and would not be abandoned in any area of the 'Land of Israel' because settling the land

⁸⁸ Sprinzak. *The Ascendancy of Israel's Radical Right*, 104.

⁸⁹ Erik Cohen, "Introduction to 'The Price of Peace: The Removal of Israeli Settlements in the Sinai,'" *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 23, no. 1 (January 1987), 4.

was a sacred mission.”⁹⁰ Fundamentalists’ doctrinal opposition to withdrawal from the Sinai was pragmatic as well as philosophical. “Anxiety over the opposition to the possible reversibility of the settlement stemmed from an ulterior fear: that withdrawal from the Sinai would lead to withdrawal from the West Bank.”⁹¹

As religiously motivated settlers migrated to the Sinai, their settlement tactics imitated the initial settlement forays in the West Bank. Illegal settlements created “facts on the ground” that settlers believed the government would be loath to remove. Settlers further believed that once these settlements existed, negotiations with the government would legitimate them, as was the case with West Bank settlements. According to Erik Cohen:

The MSW... initiated an intense campaign among its members to continue the penetration of the Yamit Region. The infiltrators created more illegal settlements, took up residence in the town of Yamit, and initiated other activities aimed at subverting the evacuation of the territories. As the date of the final stage of the withdrawal neared, the time when the bulk of the Israeli settlements in the Sinai were to be removed, the Israeli government took steps to prevent further infiltration of the Yamit Region by MSW members. In February 1982, the army closed off the area. Infiltration continued, however, until the final days of the removal.⁹²

The MSW did not limit itself to illegal settlement and extra-parliamentary activity. Rather, according to Lustick:

When the Camp David Accords were signed in 1978 – a move that Gush Emunim bitterly opposed – it precipitated a crisis for Gush supporters within the Herut and the National Religious Party, both of which officially backed the accords. One result was the formation of Tehiya (Renaissance), the first political party traceable to Gush Emunim... Tehiya was founded as an independent party comprised of both religious and non-religious ultra-nationalists. Instructively, it originated in a meeting held in March 1979 at the home of Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook... In the elections of 1981 it received 44,500 votes and placed three deputies in

⁹⁰Nuri Kilot, “Here and There: the Phenomenology of Settlement Removal from Northern Sinai.” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 23, no. 1 (January 1987), 38.

⁹¹ Kimmerling, 28.

⁹² Erik Cohen, 4.

the parliament: [ultra-nationalist physicist] Yuval Neeman, [and original Gahalet members] Geula Cohen, and Hanan Porat.⁹³

The 1981 parliamentary elections proved that for most Israelis, lasting peace with Egypt was preferable to possession of the Sinai. For the majority of settlers in the Sinai, who were motivated by desire for a higher quality of life rather than by ideology, withdrawal became a foregone conclusion. Among the farmers and businesspeople of the Yamit region, “organized opposition dissolved... among prolonged and, for Gush Emunim, embarrassing negotiations over just how generous the relocation and compensation packages awarded by the government would be.”⁹⁴

Inasmuch as secular support for the MSW eroded after the 1981 elections, and parliament clearly favored withdrawal, the MSW concentrated on extra-parliamentary, religious protest in order to halt the evacuation. According to Israeli sociologists Gideon Aran and Michael Feig:

The symbols the MSW employed – such as songs, dances study of Torah, and prayer...sought to emphasize the momentousness of the conflict created by Jewish soldiers evicting Jewish settlers from Jewish lands, thus increasing the trauma among those carrying out the evacuation.⁹⁵

As the evacuation drew nearer, fundamentalist activity in the Sinai increased, and the fundamentalists’ rhetoric increasingly sounded an eschatological theme. Protestors couched the IDF’s forced evacuation in the terminology of the epic battles of the End of Days. Sprinzak states:

People fully expected a miracle to happen. The religious-messianic psychodrama that took place in the last weeks of the struggle pushed to the front the most extreme religious figures, the mystical rabbis. The ecstatic atmosphere rendered even some legitimation to very exceptional expressions made near the end such as Rabbi Moshe Levinger’s warning that suicide might be committed and Rabbi Israel Ariel’s call to the soldiers to disobey orders.⁹⁶

⁹³ Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord*, 58.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 59-60.

⁹⁵ Gideon Aran and Michael Feige, “The Movement to Stop Withdrawal in Sinai: A Sociological Perspective,” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 23, No. 1, January 1987, Pp 80-1.

⁹⁶ Sprinzak, *The Ascendancy of Israel’s Radical Right*, 104.

The threat of violence between Israeli soldiers and citizens resonated within Israel. The Israeli news media closely covered events as they led up to the final withdrawal from Yamit, including live television coverage of the “rooftop battle” between the last holdouts of the city of Yamit and the IDF. According to Israeli political scientist Gadi Wolfsfeld:

Most of this “rooftop battle” consisted of movement members trying to prevent the evacuation by throwing bottles and stones, and occasionally pushing ladders being used by the oncoming soldiers. The sight of Jewish citizens of Israel “fighting” Israeli soldiers created considerable public controversy in Israel.⁹⁷

The interaction between the MSW and the IDF leading up to the final withdrawal from Yamit transfixed the state of Israel. However, the protest was ultimately fruitless, the prospect of peace with Egypt too alluring. For the members of Gush Emunim, the removal of Yamit was instructive, proving settlement beyond the Green Line reversible if the costs, both real and psychological, are low enough. Perhaps the frustrating experience of the Sinai withdrawal led Gush Emunim and the fundamentalists of the MSW to a more militant philosophy and greater commitment to radical actions.⁹⁸ Over the next decade, two divergent patterns are visible among the ideologues, disillusioned with the outcome of the Sinai movement: mainstream political activists redoubled their efforts to settle the remaining Occupied Territories, and radical fundamentalists formed (occasionally violent) splinter organizations. Both of these efforts increased the costs of Israeli involvement in the Occupied Territories, and attempted to redefine the hegemonic construction of Israel in religious Zionist terms.

F. POLITICAL CONSOLIDATION AND UNDERGROUND ACTIVITY

It is important to note that developments in Yamit did not occur in a vacuum. Rather, the “trauma” of Yamit informed not only future settler activity, but also reverberated throughout the contemporary settlement movement in Israel. From 1978 to 1982, as events in Yamit unfolded, moderate religious Zionists redoubled settlement

⁹⁷ Gadi Wolfsfeld, “Protest and the Removal of Yamit: Ostentatious Political Action,” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 23, no. 1 (January 1987) 113.

⁹⁸ Aran and Feige, P 74.

efforts, and strengthened ties across the Green Line through infrastructure and funding, to prohibit a replay of Yamit in Yesha. A segment of the religious Zionist population, however, could not brook with Likud or NRP support for settlement removal in Yamit. This element represented a radical minority of fundamentalist Jews before the Camp David Accords; failure to deter withdrawal in the Sinai only further radicalized them, and increased their representation in the religious Zionist camp.

Thus throughout the 1970s, and early 1980s, as Gush Emunim consolidated its presence in the West Bank and in the center-right of the Israeli political spectrum, clandestine support for an Israeli radical right – independent of traditional Israeli politics, and devoted to messianic, nationalist ideology – grew and prospered. Settlers in the West Bank armed themselves, often with IDF assistance. A culture of vigilantism and militant defense of settlement activity in the Occupied Territories flourished. After withdrawal from the Sinai, clandestine fundamentalist militancy became overt political and extra-parliamentary action. As Israel consolidated its hold on the West Bank and Gaza, and dealt the Sinai to Egypt, religious Zionists maintained their dogma of the sacredness of the totality and unity of the land of Israel both through political activism on the center-right and extralegal action on the far right.

Tracing the growth of the Kach (Thus) organization, and the political activity of its leader, Rabbi Meir Kahane, illustrates the changing nature of the Israeli radical right, from illicit and insignificant, to overt and controversial. When Kahane arrived in Israel in 1971, he achieved a limited measure of notoriety as the leader of the radical, American, Jewish Defense League. “Since 1973 the well-known pattern of provocative visits to Arab villages was established. Kahane, surrounded by followers, would come to an Arab town, demand to talk to its *mughtar* (village head), and deliver the message that there was no room for Arabs in the Holy Land.”⁹⁹ In this early period of Jewish settlement in the West Bank and Gaza, Kahane’s ostentatious action was a sideshow to Gush Emunim’s political and settlement activities. Further, the call by Kahane and his followers to expel the Arabs from Israeli territory was far more radical than any Gush Emunim formulation of relations between Jews and Palestinians in Israel’s newly

⁹⁹ Ehud Sprinzak, “The Emergence of the Israeli Radical Right,” *Comparative Politics* 21, no. 2 (January 1989) 173-4.

acquired territory. Lustick describes Gush Emunim's doctrine regarding the status of the Palestinians in Israel as such:

The Palestinians have absolutely no legitimate claim to nationhood or to any part of the country... Should they accept the establishment of Jewish rule over the whole land, various formulas of subordination, for arranging relations between Jews and non-Jews...can be discussed. Although some of these formulas offer Arabs more than others, all share one fundamental principle – that whatever rights may be accorded individuals *in* the land (rights to own property, earn a livelihood, be treated respectfully, and so forth), no group...may be recognized as having any rights *over* any portion of it.¹⁰⁰

The distinction between the radical Kahane and the more moderate Gush Emunim position is significant. While neither treats the Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories (or pre-1967 Israel, for that matter) as equals, for the radicals, relations between Jews and Arabs must be confrontational, whereas for Gush Emunim, a *modus vivendi* is attainable, once the Arabs recognize Jewish domination over the land.

As settlement activity in the densely populated, often religiously significant regions of the West Bank continued through the 1970s, intercommunal violence between Jewish settlers and Palestinians increased. Palestinians destroyed settler property, rioted, attacked settlers, and called for the destruction of Israel. With each outbreak of violence, Kahane's confrontational ethos gained credence. "In 1975, according to Israeli police officials, Kahane began to build an anti-Arab terrorist underground, the TNT (Terror Against Terror) [in Hebrew *Terror Neqed Terror*], which in the next few years would stage dozens of bloody raids against West Bank Arabs."¹⁰¹ However, propinquity does not alone explain the increase in settler violence. Violent acts, vigilantism, and armed fundamentalist dissidence proliferated largely as Camp David Accords threatened to unmake the ideologically constructed Holy Land.

While Rabbi Kahane and his followers were the public face of confrontation between civilian settlers and Palestinians, after the Camp David Accords, others covertly took up the mantle. From 1980 to 1984, a secret offshoot of Gush Emunim, which the

¹⁰⁰ Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord*, 76-9.

¹⁰¹ Robert I Friedman, "Nice Jewish Boys with Bombs," *The Village Voice*, 6 May 1986, reprinted in "From the International Press," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 15, no. 4 (Summer 1986) 195.

Israeli press dubbed the Jewish Underground, carried out violent acts against Palestinians in the West Bank. At the time, these acts looked like vigilante organization among the settlers in order to fight growing Arab terrorism.¹⁰² Jewish underground plotters attacked three Arab mayors in the West Bank, attacked the Muslim college in Hebron, and attempted to blow up five Palestinian passenger buses.¹⁰³ Although these violent acts garnered much media attention in Israel, they were not the sine qua non of armed action by the Jewish Underground. Rather the Jewish Underground coalesced around a plot to detonate the Muslim structures on the Temple Mount. But for lack of the authoritative approval of a rabbi, the Jewish Underground would have carried out its attack on the Temple Mount in 1982.¹⁰⁴ Jewish Underground members were ideological devotees of Gush Emunim and its mission. All were young men, educated in its yeshivas, who thus looked to rabbinical authorization to act against the Arabs. A collection of the Yesha's leading rabbis authorized various Underground attacks that did take place including Rabbi Moshe Levinger, leader of Kiryat Arba, and Rabbi Eliezer Waldman, then a member of the Knesset.¹⁰⁵ Ehud Sprinzak points out, "The rabbinical involvement in the terror acts that did and did not take place is of crucial importance. It tells us that the radicalization process that finally produced terrorism within Gush Emunim was not marginal but central."¹⁰⁶ For the Jewish Underground, and those like-minded, rabbinic authority superseded state authority, especially after the Camp David Accords. For those fundamentalists, the state proved to be at best an undependable ally in the cause of redemption, at worst a hindrance.

The birth of an illegal, armed underground in Yesha is not a *sui generis* phenomenon. Ideologically, the action of the Jewish Underground is an outgrowth of the eschatological theology of Gush Emunim, confronted by the crisis of withdrawal from territories. Whereas the Israeli government might have been an ideological obstacle to these activists, it facilitated arming the settlers, and is thus complicit in the civil order paradox that resulted.

¹⁰² Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, 94.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 94-6.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 98.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 99.

Following the Zionist pattern of *hashomer* security developed in the days of the Yishuv, the Israeli government believed armed settlers were essential to territorial defense. According to Sprinzak:

In 1978...Israel's Chief of Staff, General Rafael Eitan initiated a policy making each settler community in the West Bank responsible for securing the area and defending itself. Hundreds of settlers were transferred from their regular army units to the West Bank, to protect their own settlements and to secure roads and public property. Every settlement was required to have a fixed number of soldiers, including officers. They were to perform their active duty on a part-time basis while leading normal civilian lives.¹⁰⁷

At the same time the Israeli government facilitated the arming of the settlements, numbers of religious Zionists increased within the IDF itself, especially among those serving in the West Bank. That enlistment of religious Zionists in the IDF increased is logical for two reasons. First, universal conscription mandated that virtually all young people enlist, and as the movement grew, representation of the religious ideology proportionally grew. Second, for those that believe in the sacredness of Israeli, Jewish territory, service in the armed forces in the defense of that territory is as much a religious obligation as a civic duty.¹⁰⁸

Another manner by which the Israeli government increased religious Zionist representation in the IDF was by enabling nationalist yeshiva students to carry out their compulsory service without undue interruption of their studies. According to military analyst Stuart Cohen, in 1977, the IDF began to organize

the *hesder* (literally "arrangement") IDF companies whose personnel stretch their terms of compulsory conscription to five years, during which time they alternate spells of military service with study in a religious academy. Almost equally popular are the "pre-conscription religious colleges"...whose students defer their military service for a year, which they spend in efforts to strengthen their religious affiliations. Thereafter, graduates generally enlist – often en bloc – in elite fighting formations.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 135.

¹⁰⁸ Stuart A Cohen, "From Integration to Segregation: the Role of Religion in the IDF," *Armed Forces and Society* 25, no. 3 (Spring 1999) 397.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 398.

A combination of ideology and IDF actions created the framework by which every Gush Emunim settlement was essentially a military unit ready for action.¹¹⁰

Israeli leftists watched the arming of the West Bank settlements and the growing militancy of the Israeli right with alarm. In 1980, four years before the discovery of the identities of Jewish Underground members, Israeli journalists on the left postulated, “that there is a secret movement that is a threat to the authority of the law in Israel, that is a threat to democracy...and may well be a threat to the government of Israel too.”¹¹¹ Leftists despaired not only over the threat to civil order posed by armed underground radicals on the West Bank. They also feared for their own safety in the climate created, “Once an extremist group decides to take the ‘law’ into its own hands, carrying out acts of vengeance and retaliation against outside enemies, it soon begins to apply the same methods to those it calls traitors within the camp.”¹¹² While this prediction might have seemed alarmist in 1980, later actions by fundamentalist zealots against Israelis illustrated its prescience, for example the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin. At this time, the creation of an armed, ideological, militia in the Gush Emunim settlements of the West Bank was less threatening to the Israeli government than it was to its Palestinian neighbors because West Bank Palestinians were the greater impediment to settlers’ messianic aims. Later, when the Israeli government threatened the messianic enterprise with “Land for Peace” negotiations with the Palestinians, its representatives became traitors to fundamentalist thinking, and thus vulnerable to the threats described above.

As discussed earlier, the most radical and often influential Gush Emunim intellectuals enthusiastically supported Jewish Underground acts. Support from more moderate religious Zionist leaders was equivocal. They argued that while lamentable, vigilante acts were necessary in the environment wherein settlements confronted enemy Arabs, who will massacre Jews at every opportunity, and lived under a government, that

¹¹⁰ From the Israeli Press, “An Armed Right in Israel,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 1 (Autumn 1980) 144.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 142.

¹¹² Ibid.

is more interested in political expediency than Zionist dreams of settling the Land of Israel.¹¹³

The increasing level of settler violence in the West Bank from 1979-84 was an important factor in the leadership struggle within the traditional political arm of religious Zionism, the NRP. The other major cause for “Young Guard” dissatisfaction with the NRP in this era was its support for the Camp David Accords, which through the cession of the Sinai and promises of limited autonomy for the Palestinians threatened the messianic enterprise of the ideologically committed “Young Guard” leaders.

The Israeli government did despair over the increasing level of settler violence against Palestinians in the occupied territories through in early 1980’s. From 1981-2, Deputy Attorney General Yehudit Karp investigated settler acts of vigilantism and violence. Her report urged the government, “To find an urgent solution in order to prevent the deterioration and damage to the rule of law.”¹¹⁴ At the same time, Israeli state security began its investigation of the Jewish Underground, which culminated in the arrests of the plotters in 1984, as they conspired to detonate Palestinian passenger buses.¹¹⁵ Thus Sprinzak states:

Such discontent has also been stimulated by the fact that [even] some of the NRP’s Young Guard moderated their support for Gush Emunim tactics...upon assuming positions of responsibility in the Begin government. As a result, many supporters of the settler movement have concluded that other parties, such as Tehiya or Kach can better represent their views... Movement in this direction has been further reinforced by the emergence of Morasha [in 1984], a party established by Rabbi Haim Druckman, a former NRP member of the Knesset... Morasha’s dedication to the fusion of religious Orthodoxy and militant territorial maximalism appeals to traditional NRP voters who identify with Gush Emunim¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Tessler, “The Political Right In Israel: Its Origins, Growth, and Prospects,” P 34.

¹¹⁴ From The Israeli Press, “The Karp Report,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, no. 4 (Summer 1984) 161.

¹¹⁵ Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel’s Radical Right*, 98.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 35.

According to Ehud Sprinzak, political splintering from the NRP during this period actually strengthened the political cachet of religious Zionism. Minor variations in party doctrine created a thriving civic culture and a variegated political system.¹¹⁷

G. THE JEWISH INTIFADA

By 1987, the hegemonic project of religious Zionism, to incorporate the West Bank and Gaza into what Israelis recognized as Israel, appeared to be largely successful. “Those parts of the Green Line running between the West Bank and Gaza on one the one hand and Israel on the other had become nearly invisible to most Israelis.”¹¹⁸ Settlement construction and the construction of associated infrastructure, as well as the growing importance of the settler movement in politics, created a situation wherein many Israelis viewed the occupied territories as an extension of the state of Israel. As Tessler says, “Not only did the number of Israelis living [in the occupied territories] rise steadily, reaching more than 70,000 (excluding East Jerusalem) on the eve of the Intifada, other Israelis frequently found themselves in the territories, traveling through the West Bank to get from one part of Israel to another, taking their cars to garages in Gaza...and much more.”¹¹⁹ The anti-Israeli violence associated with outbreak of the Intifada in the occupied territories in December, 1987, resurrected “the Green Line in the consciousness of most Israelis. The territories [became] zones of insecurity which Israeli civilians avoid as much as possible and where even soldiers would prefer not to serve.”¹²⁰ As the crisis deepened, the majority of Israelis in pre-1967 Israel sought ways to extricate themselves from the conflict. Most formulations involved parting with some or all of the occupied territories. That those not affiliated with the settler movement would willingly part with occupied territory in order to end conflict with the Palestinians illustrates that the project to incorporate the occupied territories into Israel failed to attain hegemony. The religious Zionists’ hegemonic project to redefine Israel in eschatological terms has also therefore failed to attain hegemony.

¹¹⁷ Sprinzak, “The Emergence of the Israeli Radical Right,” 189.

¹¹⁸ Mark Tessler, “The Intifada and Political Discourse in Israel,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 19, no. 2 (Winter 1990) 44.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 45.

Settlers and fundamentalists, however, steeled their resolve to keep the land, and thus – according to their ideology – stay the course for redemption. They initiated their own protest, the “Jewish Intifada,” in order to prevent withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. The religious Zionists’ failure to alter the hegemonic definition of the state of Israel relegated the “Jewish Intifada” to the loss of incumbent-level consensus. According to Israeli historian and social critic Benny Morris, “the return of Labor to power and the start of Israeli-PLO negotiations triggered a renewal of Jewish terrorism against Palestinians in the West Bank...and a campaign of delegitimization against the government.”¹²¹ As if negotiations did not threaten fundamentalists enough, the 1993 Oslo Declaration of Principles – an agreement, in principle, to begin transferring control of portions of the occupied territories to Palestinian control, albeit over a number of years – was a negation of the religious Zionist fundamental tenet of maintaining the entire Land of Israel under Jewish control. Opposition to the Oslo talks was instantaneous. The Kach and Kahane Chai movements announced that they would carry out “provocations” in order to provoke a cycle of violence that would disrupt the negotiations and prevent an agreement.¹²² The most infamous provocation was the 25 February 1994 attack by Baruch Goldstien, a member of Kahane Chai, upon the Ibrahimi Mosque, the Muslim site at the Cave of the Patriarchs, resulting in the deaths of 30 worshippers.¹²³ In response to this attack, the Israeli government outlawed both Kach and Kahane Chai.¹²⁴ However the growing opposition among the settlers towards the government and sentiment in support of like acts continued, unabated.

The prospect of transferring control of Yesha territory to the Palestinians radicalized previously moderate (compared to Kach and Kahane Chai, for example) members of Gush Emunim. No longer trusting the IDF to protect settler interests, “The Yesha Council had been becoming increasingly vocal in supporting talk about reviving

¹²¹ Benny Morris, “After Rabin,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1996) 84.

¹²² Peter Shaw-Smith, “The Israeli Settler Movement Post-Oslo,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 23, no. 3 (Spring 1994) 101.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 107.

¹²⁴ State of Israel, Cabinet, “Cabinet Decision Outlawing Kach and Kahane Chai,” 13, March, 1994, available online, <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il> [10 October, 2002].

'Hashomer' guard units to defend settlements throughout the territories.”¹²⁵ Foremost in the minds of Gush Emunim leaders was the fear of a replay of the “trauma” of Yamit – IDF units forcibly evacuating settlers and bulldozing settlements. To forestall this eventuality, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, former chief rabbi of the IDF, composed an in-depth religious ruling that prohibited the surrender of Jewish rule over any portion of the Land of Israel, and that therefore forbade Jewish soldiers’ participation in all operations that implemented the transfer of territory to Palestinian jurisdiction.¹²⁶ The uniform unpopularity of the Oslo Declaration of Principles in Yesha communities, combined with growing settler representation among the IDF soldiers serving in the occupied territories, fomented a serious threat to civil and military order in the territories. “At the beginning of December [1993] settlers accompanied by soldiers were filmed rampaging through Hebron, opening fire on Palestinian stone-throwers.”¹²⁷

As with the case of leftists’ selective refusal to serve in the occupied territories discussed in Chapter II of this thesis, the above-mentioned political unrest in the IDF illustrates the lack of incumbent-level consensus regarding the employment of the IDF in the occupied territories. The centrality of the IDF to the Israeli state (discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis) makes incumbent-level divisions regarding the employment of the IDF problematic to the Zionist hegemonic definition of Israeliness.

After Oslo, religious Zionist perceptions of the Israeli government shifted. Whereas the government was once an unwitting accomplice to ultimate salvation, its propensity to trade away land, after Oslo, made it a traitorous impediment to the messianic age. The legitimacy of the government, its laws, and institutions came into question. According to Morris, faced with the real prospect of retreat from Yesha, “Teachers and rabbis inculcated the message that fealty to the Land of Israel is the supreme divine command, outweighing all other imperatives.”¹²⁸ The culmination of the negation of Israeli authority by fundamentalist leaders was the 4 November, 1995, assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by Yigal Amir, a product of Gush

¹²⁵ Shaw-Smith, 104.

¹²⁶ Cohen, 400.

¹²⁷ Shaw-Smith, 103.

¹²⁸ Morris, 84.

Emunim yeshivot.¹²⁹ The act of assassinating the Prime Minister alone, while audacious, does not illustrate a process of negation of Israeli authority among settlers; it could have been the act of a lone psychopath. Amir's act however, like those of the Jewish Underground before it, attained the patina of legitimacy by rabbinical pronouncement. For example, "Weeks before the murder a number of rabbis and cabbalists issued and published a curse...against Rabin, positing his murder, and consigning his soul to utter darkness."¹³⁰

Popular outrage over the Rabin assassination staggered fundamentalist Jewish activism, and all but ended the Jewish Intifada. However, Rabin's successor Shimon Peres' limited mandate constrained his freedom to implement the transfer of land Palestinians, and Peres' successor, Benjamin Netanyahu, was not inclined to do so. Throughout the 1990s, the construction of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza continued apace. In those respects, the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin effectively halted withdrawal from Yesha.

H. YAMIT IN YESHA?

The threat of renewed settler violence, a veritable replay of the Jewish Intifada, this time concomitant with the Al-Aqsa Intifada, re-emerged in 2002, when the National Unity government took action to remove settlement outposts in the West Bank. The settlement outposts are not legal settlements, rather they are uninhabited or not permanently inhabited structures, usually built near a religious site (for Jews or Muslims), or on the site of previous inter-communal violence. In June 2002, the Defense Ministry began to study outpost removal, "Because of difficulties encountered by the IDF in providing security for them."¹³¹

As in the case of Oslo, rabbinical authorities affiliated with Gush Emunim declared the removal of outposts to be sinful. For example, Rabbi Zalman Melamed of

¹²⁹ Ibid, 77, 84.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 86.

¹³¹ Amos Har-el, "Defense Officials Ponder Fate of Illegal Outposts," *Ha'Aretz*, 13 June 2002; in "Israel: Defense Officials Discuss Fate of Illegal Outposts," FBIS Document GMP20020613000095, 13 June, 2002.

the Beit El settlement issued a rabbinical ruling directed at soldiers, stating in part, “It is completely and absolutely forbidden for any person in Israel to evacuate Jewish outposts in the Land of Israel, and just as a person is obliged to refuse an order that desecrates the Sabbath, he must also refuse an order to evacuate an outpost, even if he will be punished as a result.”¹³² Inasmuch as pronouncements such as this originate with rabbis, they have significant currency with religious members of the IDF. Reminiscent of the Yamit evacuation, motivated settlers known as “Hilltop Youth” have been organizing civil disobedience against soldiers attempting to remove settlement outposts.

The combination of pressure from rabbis and revulsion at the prospect of combating fellow Jews while in the act of outpost removal makes this duty traumatic for IDF soldiers, especially religious soldiers. “Three young Nahal Brigade officers refused to take part in evacuating the illegal outpost of Havat Gilad, making them the first right-wingers to refuse an order. The three explained to their commanders that they were religious and lived on settlements, and could not be part of ‘uprooting settlements from the Land of Israel.’”¹³³ That even the specter of Israeli withdrawal from occupied territory – potential withdrawal from an uninhabited outpost for security reasons – creates protest of this magnitude illustrates the progress religious Zionist ideology has made since Yamit in captivating the political consciousness of Israel.

It is important to note that many in the settlement movement criticized the rabbis’ call for dissent, as well as selective refusal of religious soldiers in the face of outpost removal. For example:

Sha’ul Goldstein, head of the Etzion Bloc Council, criticized the rabbis’ recent rulings and accused them of harming the IDF. “The rabbis’ call could destroy the army,” Goldstein said, adding... “We must not bring politics into the IDF, and we must not encourage our children to hesitate to carry out orders, despite all our sorrow and pain at the outposts’

¹³² Nadav Shragai, Gideon Alon, and Amos Har-el, “A-G: No Charges Against Rabbi who Forbade Outpost Removal,” *Ha’Aretz*, 23 October 2002; in “Israel’s AG Decides not to Prosecute Rabbis who Urged Troops to Refuse Orders,” FBIS Document GMP20021023000035, 23 October, 2002.

¹³³ Felix Frish, “The Right Wing’s First Refuseniks,” *Tel Aviv Ynet*, 30 October 2002; in “Israel: First-Time Refusal by Soldiers on Political Right to Evacuate Outposts,” FBIS Document GMP200210300000187, 30 October, 2002.

evacuation. In my assessment, an absolute majority of the residents in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip does not back the rabbis' decision."¹³⁴

This criticism from within the settler movement illustrates the most important theoretical implication of this chapter. Religious Zionists have failed to make their construction of Zionism - wherein Israeli territory is sacred, and that sacredness is the *sine qua non* of Israeliness - hegemonic. Furthermore, this criticism recognizes that allowing political divisions to enter the IDF challenges the unity of that institution, and thus could challenge hegemonic consensus about the IDF as an essential institution of the Israeli state. Most interesting is that a representative of the settler movement is self-consciously willing to cede territory, and therefore to sacrifice his own ideological construction of Israel, in order to preserve hegemonic consensus of the Israeli state and its institutions.

I. WITHDRAWAL PANGS

Religious Zionists failed to redefine the hegemonic definition of Israel within their ideological framework. However, through their settlement enterprise they created conditions within Israel that make withdrawal from the occupied territories almost prohibitively costly to incumbent-level consensus for any government to undertake. The unrest created with the prospect of settlement withdrawal is thus politically destabilizing in Israel. Among the most destabilizing facets of the political battle regarding withdrawal is the fact that many IDF soldiers within the territories are often sympathetic to the settler movement. Various rabbis' and political leaders' condemnations of any cession of territory to the Palestinians as a rejection of Israel's redemptive mission exacerbate these soldiers' sympathies. However, hegemony exerts a stronger pull than incumbent-level consensus; therefore, withdrawal from the occupied territories is still a possibility. Lacking an alternative hegemonic conceptualization of Israel that fits their ideology, religious Zionists will accept withdrawal from much of the occupied territories in order to preserve the existing hegemonic conceptualization of Israel.

¹³⁴ Yuval Qarni, "Disagreements between Yesha Rabbis in Wake of Halakhic Ruling Calling for the Refusal of Orders," *Yediot Aharonot*, 22 October 02; in "Israeli Settlers Question Rabbi's Halakhic Ruling Urging Troops to Refuse Orders," FBIS Document GMP20021022000154, 22 October, 2002.

IV. UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL: THE TRIUMPH OF HEGEMONIC CONSENSUS

A. UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL IN THE MAINTENANCE OF HEGEMONY

Chapter III discussed the failure of religious Zionists' conceptualization of Israel to attain hegemony. As Lustick states, "The biggest obstacle to hegemonic construction has been the vast Arab majority in 'Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza District,' specifically the severe contradiction between the presence of angry and sometimes violent opposition of nearly two million noncitizen Arabs and claims that these portions of the Land of Israel had been transformed into integral parts of the state of Israel."¹³⁵ This is problematic because Israel retains possession over territory that germinates inter-communal conflict, and about which no hegemonic consensus exists. Israel's quest for security in that territory, enforced by the IDF, challenges both incumbent-level political consensus and hegemonic consensus among its citizens due to the centrality of the institution of the IDF to the Israeli state. Unilateral withdrawal from most of the occupied territory would resolve the crisis of hegemonic consensus regarding the employment of the IDF described in Chapter II. Although politically difficult, failure to incorporate the occupied territories on a hegemonic level, combined with a desire to preserve the hegemonically agreed upon institution of the IDF, favors this unilateral disengagement.

B. TOWARDS UNILATERAL DISENGAGEMENT

Since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, many opponents of occupation have abandoned their preference for negotiated settlement with the Palestinians in favor of unilateral withdrawal from the occupied territories. Calls for unilateral withdrawal are phrased in terms consistent with the existing hegemonic conceptualization of Israel and the IDF described in the introduction to this thesis. They call for the IDF to return to its defensive mission within the borders of Israel. Further, they demonstrate a desire to

¹³⁵ Ian Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995, P 393.

separate from the Palestinians as a way of extricating themselves from a “war of choice” in the occupied territories. This desire conveys the hegemonic consensus that Israel is a fundamentally peaceful nation and that conflict should be *ein brera*, forced upon Israel rather than sought out.

The power struggle for control of the Labor Party following the collapse of the National Unity government in 2002 invigorated the demand for unilateral withdrawal. In the face of deepening military incursions into the occupied territories, and with no resolution to the Al-Aqsa uprising on the military or political horizons, Labor leaders vying to lead their party sought to offer an alternative to the conflict. Labor MK, and third-place finisher in the Labor party election of November, 2002, Haim Ramon:

Was one of the first people in the peace camp to draw decisive conclusions from the collapse of the peace process. He called for a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and most of the West Bank, and was one of the first to demand construction of a fence separating the West Bank from Israel, an idea that has become the [political] consensus.¹³⁶

Although Ramon did not win the Labor elections, the winner, Amram Mitzna, supported his calls for unilateral withdrawal and separation. In fact, Mitzna’s proposal for a unilateral solution to the Al-Aqsa Intifada is even more radical than Ramon’s. According to *Ha’Aretz*:

Mitzna’s diplomatic-security message is clear. He is ready to resume negotiations immediately, with any Palestinian leader willing to do so. If there are no negotiations, he will strive for physical and political separation between Israel and the territories via a deep unilateral withdrawal and rapid construction of an effective security fence.¹³⁷

Mitzna’s platform resonates because it evokes the hegemonic consensus of Israel’s security established by Zionist leaders at the state’s foundation. He suggests that without the occupied territories, Israel could return to the state of *ein brera*, potentially in conflict with a neighboring state (in this case a Palestinian state), but not a conflict of choice.

¹³⁶ *Ha’Aretz* Editorial Staff, “Editorial: Mitzna offers an alternative,” *Ha’Aretz*, 19 November 2002, in “Ha’Aretz: Mitzna Offers An Alternative,” FBIS Document GMP20021119000021, 19 November, 2002.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Seeking physical separation from the occupied territories in order to facilitate defense of Israel is not a policy exclusive to the Labor opposition. One facet of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's "Operation Defensive Shield" was the construction of a security wall between the Israeli population and the Palestinian population of the West Bank. Sharon's defensive wall exists entirely in the occupied territories, and accompanied a military re-occupation of the West Bank. Nonetheless, opponents of Sharon's policies recognized the potential for the defensive posture of "Operation Defensive Shield" to mutate into a defensive posture that permanently separates the Israeli population from Palestinian territory. As columnist Yisrael Harel wrote in *Ha'Aretz*:

Exactly 35 years after the Six Day War and after two years of ruthless, unending, terrorist warfare, the government of Israel – unable to withstand the pressures of an exhausted public and of past and present senior officials in the defense establishment – has decided to build a security separation line that will generally match the 1949 armistice lines. And that line will of necessity – and not only because what's far from the eye is far from the heart – become the political separation line.¹³⁸

That the security wall is a return to the Green Line is not entirely true. Sharon's proposed defensive perimeter encapsulated occupied territories settled by Jews including many of the *Yishuv Kehillatim* of the West Bank and much of East Jerusalem.

In the debate over unilateral disengagement, religious Zionists opposed to withdrawal largely abandoned the language of their own hegemonic project, the sacredness of Israeli territory. Rather, they join the debate in the terms of original Zionist hegemonic consensus, that the Arabs are waging war against the existence of the Israeli state, rather than just the occupation. An example of this is found in Yisrael Ariel's editorial from *Hatzofe*, the news organ of the NRP:

Mitzna is willing to forgo the state of Israel in advance and announce on a one-sided arrangement. He is not afraid of making such declarations, even if the Palestinians will not accept it. He does not, however, answer questions that pertain to our existence. Will such an agreement not constitute the victory of terrorism? Will it really end the war, or perhaps it

¹³⁸ Yisrael Harel, "Sharon grants victory to Arafat," *Ha'Aretz*, 14 June 2002, in "Israeli Commentary Criticizes 'Security Wall' as Victory for Arafat," FBIS Document GMP20020613000264, 14 June 2002.

would only make the Palestinian struggle against the very existence of the state of Israel continue?¹³⁹

In the above passage, Ariel characterizes the Palestinian uprising as another phase in the Arab struggle to destroy Israel, another war of no choice. On one level, Arab action in the Al-Aqsa Intifada reinforces this sentiment. Attacks against Jewish civilians on both sides of the Green Line created a sense of insecurity throughout Israel. As described in Chapter II, the crisis of hegemonic consensus regarding the employment of the IDF in occupation is countered by the desire to strike at the sources of insecurity.

However, after two violent uprisings many Israelis recognize the occupied territories as alien land, and its population as hostile to the people of Israel. The original hegemonic construction of the state of Israel, born of conflict with its Arab neighbors, and thus a militarized society prepared to defend its survival, engenders a degree of comfort among Israelis with this definition of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship.

C. YAMIT AS A PRESCRIPTIVE MODEL

Just as religious Zionists feared, there are many parallels between potential Israeli unilateral disengagement from the occupied territories and the negotiated withdrawal from Yamit. According to psychologist Gabriel Sheffer, in Yamit, “a vast majority generally supported the peace treaty with Egypt because of their fatigue with wars and conflict with the Arabs. More significantly, this majority was ready to acknowledge that peace would require the removal of settlements.”¹⁴⁰ Mounting casualty tolls and international opprobrium caused by the Al-Aqsa Intifada have again fatigued the Israeli polity with conflict.

Sheffer states that, “The government [through the IDF] not the general public or the parties’ machineries, was the chief actor in the Sinai evacuation.”¹⁴¹ Hegemonic definitions of the persistent state of conflict created the conditions of the militarized state.

¹³⁹ Yehuda Ariel, “Mitzna’s Truth,” *Hatzofe*, 26 November 2002, in “Pundit Says Mitzna Victory Harmful to Settlement Movement, Land of Israel,” FBIS Document GMP20021126000194, 26 November, 2002.

¹⁴⁰ Gabriel Sheffer, “Was it Really a Trauma? Wider Political Implications of the Removal of Israeli Settlements from Sinai,” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 23, no. 1 (January 1987) 127.

Under these conditions, the Israeli government had significant latitude to employ the IDF to remove settlements in Yamit in order to aid the defense of the nation, despite the objections of a segment of the Israeli population. As shown in Chapter III, in the wake of the religious Zionists' failure to change the hegemonic consensus operating in Yamit, the same conditions apply to withdrawal from the occupied territories. Withdrawal is a political question, albeit a contentious one, but not a threat to regime stability.

In the case of withdrawal from Yamit, "despite gloomy predictions or wishful thinking of radical opponents, no popular uprising against the evacuation occurred, for these opponents failed to mobilize large groups to stage greater opposition to the government."¹⁴² The protest against the Yamit evacuation reflected turmoil in the incumbent-level consensus, not the hegemonic. Although incumbent-level identification with settlements in the West Bank and Gaza is greater than identification with the Yamit settlements, leaders such as Amram Mitzna believe the challenge is still political, not hegemonic. He says:

I think that the threats of a civil war and the harsh scenes we see...when we try to evacuate a trailer from illegal settlements – all this is actually a political campaign to scare the Israeli public into believing that the situation is in effect irreversible. I believe that when an elected government in Israel will pass decisions, albeit tough ones, the vast majority of these people – who are devoted and loyal to the state of Israel and who live today in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza – will comply with the government's call to return home, because this is what real Israeli patriotism is today.¹⁴³

Mitzna makes this claim because the original Zionist hegemonic construction of Israel remains intact. Religious Zionists undertook a war of position to alter the hegemonic conceptualization of Israel, however their project did not succeed. The strength of hegemony causes religious Zionists to thus abandon their political preference for territory when it destabilizes hegemonic consensus. The strength of hegemony paves the way for unilateral disengagement from the occupied territories.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Arye Golan interview with Labor Party Chairman Amram Mitzna, *Jerusalem Voice of Israel Network B*, 0505 GMT, 24 November, 2002, in "Israel: Mitzna Dismisses 'Civil War' if Settlements Evacuated, Need for Bodyguards," FBIS Document GMP20021124000030, 24 November 2002.

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V. CONCLUSION

In the pursuit of the creation of the Israeli nation-state, Zionists created a civil Israeli identity, of which Jewish religio-ethnic affiliation is only a facet. The Zionist hegemonic project created the conditions wherein, in addition to Jewish ethnicity, Israeli identity involves participation in the Israeli state. The exemplary institution of the Israeli state is the IDF. It represents the Israeli state's greatest extractive capacity, and is unique among nations in the degree to which it extracts from its citizenry.

The introduction of this thesis discusses Israel as a socially constructed entity; therefore, hegemonic consensus is essential for the body politic to support Israel's institutions. Challenges to hegemonic consensus challenge people's perceptions of the legitimacy of the regime that governs them. Inasmuch as the IDF is a pillar of the Israeli hegemonic conceptualization of Israel, to challenge the institution of the IDF is to challenge Israel on a hegemonic, or regime level. Hegemonic consensus of the IDF depicts a defensive force, created and maintained to defend against the hostile environment that constantly imperils Israel. The fundamental expression of the danger that justifies IDF existence and action is the notion that Israel's wars are fought *ein brera*, without choice. The lack of consensus regarding the choice to employ the IDF, originally in Lebanon, but especially in the occupied territories, challenges the hegemonically accepted construction of the IDF. Selective refusal to serve in the IDF is a forceful expression of the challenges to the Israeli government generated by lack of consensus regarding the IDF. Increasing acceptability of selective refusal among the Israeli polity illustrates the fundamental challenge occupation poses to hegemonic consensus, and thus to regime stability in Israel.

Not all Israelis accept the hegemonic conceptualization of Israel or of the IDF. Religious Zionists undertook a hegemonic project to alter the original Zionist hegemony, to redefine Israeliness in religious terms. A fundamental tenet of the religious Zionists' conceptualization was the sacredness of all Israeli territory, even territory occupied after the 1967 War. Religious Zionists waged a Gramscian war of position to reconfigure hegemonic consensus in Israel to their own understanding. Their hegemonic project

failed to alter the fundamental hegemonic construction of the state of Israel, however it raised the incumbent-level costs of withdrawal from the occupied territories to an almost prohibitive level.

Occupation threatens to undermine hegemonic consensus about Israel. As a result, Israelis' desire to maintain existing hegemonic consensus, the Zionist conceptualization of the state of Israel, should in the end be sufficient to overcome any political desire to maintain possession of the occupied territories. Thus, Israel is able to withdraw from the occupied territories without destabilizing the Zionist regime.

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